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ABSTRACT

This document contains six papers exploring the training and learning of older people in Australia's vocational education and training (VET), and of technical and further education (TAFE) programs in the adult and community sectors. "Preface" (Andrew Smith) discusses the adequacy of training opportunities available to older Australians in view of the country's rapidly aging population which, combined with a lower birth rate, is rapidly changing the labor market situation. The following are among the issues considered in "The Need for Training and Learning" (Josie Misko): demographic changes; age, health, and economic productivity; the cognitive and physical effects of aging; age stereotypes and ways of overcoming them; and the imperatives of lifelong learning. "Older People in VET" (Jane Schueler) examines older Australians' participation in VET and TAFE, sowing that although older people are generally satisfied with VET, without employer support during their studies and without career guidance and resources provided for them, training outcomes for older students will not be improved. Labor market and training issues for older workers in different industries and occupations are considered in "Training and Labour Market Issues" (Katrina Ball). "Case Studies" (Kate Barnett) reports what 12 older Australians revealed about the role of formal training in mature workers' lives, the levels of mobility and self-employment among mature workers, and factors affecting participation in training, illustrating factors which encourage and inhibit training participation. In summary, Andrew Smith concludes that older people are adapting to the changes in society and the workplace by taking up opportunities for training and learning in ever greater numbers, and doing so in a tactical manner that will enhance their adaptability and flexibility. (Contains 51 references, 12 figures, and 24 tables). (MN)

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Training, learning and the older person

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Creating a future

Training, learning and the older person

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ANDREW SMITH

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1999

The International Year of the Older Person

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Preface

As people live longer and healthier lives, the old assumptions about people retiring from work completely at the age of sixty or younger and living lives unconnected to the world of work are giving way to a situation in which an increasing number of older people prolong their working lives well past the conventional age of retirement. At the same time as the expectations of people regarding their working lives are changing, the nature of work has also been the subject of significant change in recent years. More people are experiencing multiple changes in career as the security of employment once offered by large enterprises and the public sector has disappeared in the wake of downsizing. Changes in career and the desire of many to remain active in the workforce longer are two of the most important forces reshaping the training and learning experiences of older Australians.

Australia's population is rapidly ageing in line with international demographic trends. This ageing of the population is accompanied by a shift in the demographic profile, with the lower birth rates of recent years contributing to a decline in the proportion of people 15 to 24 years of age in the working age population.

These workforce demographics have great significance for the training and learning of older people. As older workers remain in the workforce longer and are increasingly subject to career change, access to training and learning opportunities will become more important to them. As older workers remain at work, the necessity for reorienting the Australian training system towards reskilling of older, adult workers will become increasingly important.

Moreover it is important to understand the labour market situation and training opportunities facing older Australians and to assess if older Australians have equitable opportunities and access to training compared with younger members of the labour market. The aim of this book is to explain how training and learning has assisted the participation of older workers in the workforce. *Creating a future: Training, learning and the older person* also identifies the specific training issues facing older Australians, to assist this sector of the workforce in achieving its potential.

Andrew Smith

1

The need for training and learning

Josie Misko

In this book we define older people as those aged 45 years and over. The rationale for this division is not based on assumptions about any dramatic changes to the physical or cognitive capacities that happen to people when they reach 45, but on trends in the labour market which show that unemployment for those aged 45 years and over is longer in duration than for younger workers and that re-employment for people in these age groups is more difficult.

Demographic changes

Projections to the year 2051 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (1998) show that the ageing of the Australian population will be a continuing trend. This trend is attributed to lower rates of fertility which have been part of the Australian demography for an extended period of time. The median age of the Australian population was 34 years in 1997. It is expected to increase to 40 to 41 years in 2021 and to 44 to 46 years in 2051. In addition where about a tenth of the population was 65 years or over in 1997, this figure will increase to about a quarter of the population in 2051. The ABS also notes that the highest growth for this age group is expected to take place between 2011 and 2021 when 'baby boomers'—those born from around the end of World War II to 1960—will reach this age group.

The age structure of the Australian population currently shows a declining proportion of 0 to14 year olds, which acts to increase the median age. ABS projections also show an increase in the proportion of 85 year olds by 2051, and a considerable rise in the proportion of those aged 45 to 64 towards the end of the period.

The ABS also reports that these changes are mirrored internationally. For example Japan, Greece, New Zealand, and Canada are also expected to double the proportion of their populations in the 65 years and over age group by 2050.

However, for China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea this proportion will increase threefold. For other advanced economies (United States, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Sweden, Netherlands, and Italy) the rates will be over the 20 per cent mark.

Life-expectancy rates

The ageing of the population profile is also affected strongly by increasing life expectancy rates. Data from the World Bank Development Group (1998) shows that in 1996 the rate of life-expectancy at birth for Japan was 80 years. For countries such as Australia, Austria, Canada, Costa Rica, Finland, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Kuwait, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States life expectancy ranged between 77 years and 79 years. Life expectancy at birth is also related to income; with high-income earners achieving a life-expectancy-at-birth rate of 77 years and those of low income one of 63 years.

In addition, life-expectancy-at-birth rates for females are generally higher than for males. Higher levels of female life expectancy at birth in advanced economies such as Australia will mean that old age will become increasingly feminised. For Australia the life-expectancy rate for females was 81.1 years. That for males was 75.2 years. The life expectancy at birth for indigenous women is also greater than that for males. In 1989 the life expectancy at birth of Aboriginal males was 49 years, and that for females was 62 years. In addition, higher levels of divorced and separated people amongst the baby boomers will mean that many more will be living alone in old age. According to Professor Graeme Hugo from the University of Adelaide this means that 'the hidden support of the elderly partner isn't going to be the case in the future if the greater proportion are going to be living by themselves' (cited in Williams, p. 8). Coupled with the fact that women are likely to outlive men by an average of 6 years, support programs will need to cater predominantly for women.

These demographic differences for males and females are also mirrored in the United States. In 1995 the United States Bureau of the Census data (AARP 1997) showed that older men (65 years and older) were almost twice as likely to be married than older women, and that widows outnumbered widowers by about five to one. In addition the numbers of divorced people in 1995 had increased by three times the rate of the older population as a whole since 1990. Where over three-quarters of men not living in an institution lived with a spouse, just under half of women not living in an institution lived with a spouse. Women were also twice as likely to be living either alone or with non-relatives than men, and twice as likely as men to be living with other relatives.

If we are living longer and healthier lives and this is especially evident in the baby-boomer generation, this will also alter the traditional ways that we have viewed old age and old aged care. According to Professor Hugo baby-boomers will be less likely to opt for residential care, as they grow older and less mobile, and more likely to live at home with an increased demand for better quality, home-based care. Increased demand for independent living will require an intensification of life-skills or programs aimed at helping individuals cope with ageing.

Age and economic productivity

In advanced economies such as Australia entry into the workforce and exit from the workforce has generally been associated with age restrictions—children attend school for a mandatory period that commences between the ages of five and six and continues until the ages of 14 or 15. At these ages they are then legally eligible to enter the workforce. The traditional age for exiting the workforce (legal retirement age) in many advanced economies has until very recently been between 60 and 65 years. Men in countries such as Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Germany Australia and Austria, generally expect to stay in the workforce longer than women (Moore, Tilson & Whitting 1994).

The legal retirement age in advanced economies was established to provide superannuation benefits for workers who would no longer be able to provide the labour required by a heavily industrialised economy. The legal retirement age then signalled the formal advent of 'old age'. It was established by governments in conjunction with unions, employers and workers (Walker 1997). In the United States the legal retirement age was established in 1933 when the country adopted Social Security policies (Winning 1995).

So long as economic productivity in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries could support the pension programs required to support these retirement age barriers, there was no need to shift the socially constructed view of old age supported by public policies. However the dynamics of the labour market in many countries began to change during the 1970s and 1980s as economies tried to maintain economic viability in increasingly more competitive international markets. The ability of industry and commerce to compete effectively both internationally and at home was dependent to a large extent on their adoption of new computer and information technologies (IT), and the restructuring of their industries. Labour intensive manufacturing functions increasingly went offshore to places where wages were cheaper, non-skilled labour was plentiful, and government restrictions were few. The movement for restructuring industry to make it more competitive at home and overseas was based on economic-rationalist policies for downsizing companies by retrenching workers. Early retirement schemes that began at 55 years of age rather than at 65 were offered to workers, often along with generous redundancy packages.

Although the traditional prescribed retirement ages of 60 to 65 years were based on views of the decreasing ability of older workers to maintain the same level of productivity that they had exhibited during their youth, the push for early retirement was based on purely economic factors. Companies needed to reduce their workforces and one way to do this was to offer early retirement packages. Walker (1997) believes that this early exit from productive employment for older workers has been influenced by recession, unemployment and redundancy. He notes that countries such as Sweden, Denmark and Germany established public policies that actively promoted early exit from the labour force. In addition age-discrimination practices in the labour market decreased the likelihood of re-employment of workers once they had been retrenched. Promoting options for early retirement is a trend currently being evaluated in many OECD countries —particularly in those countries which gave it early legislative support (Walker 1997).

Driving this re-evaluation of early exit policies is the realisation that increased longevity and good health for baby-boomers, coupled with declining birth rates, means that governments will find it increasingly difficult to fund retirement pensions that are based on early and traditional retirement age barriers. In Europe the effects of ageing population profiles are already influencing the development of reforms aimed at extending the working life of older workers. These reforms include increasing or making more flexible the age of retirement, the promotion of gradual retirement and the lengthening of pension contribution periods (Moore, Tilson & Whitting 1994). Italy has a birth rate of 1.3 per cent (well below rate of replacement) and is already experiencing the problems associated with increases in the proportion of older people who need to be supported by public pensions. Claydon (1990) reports that statements in the British parliament highlighted the problems posed for governments of allocating public monies to the maintenance of those who were healthy enough to earn their own incomes but were prevented from doing so by prescribed retirement ages.

Claydon (1990) however is concerned that the move to extend the working lives of older people in order to reduce the burden on the public purse has come at a time when there is a reduction of the need for increases in the workforce in advanced economies.

Apart from the economic imperatives to increase the ability of older workers to remain in the workforce so that they can continue to fund their own pensions there are other reasons for increasing the ages at which workers are expected to retire. This is related to declining rates in the proportion of young people who will be able to take up all the available jobs as the population profile ages. Warr (1998, p. 1) speculates that this will mean that young people with higher qualifications will be in great demand and that older people will have to 'fill the gap'. In such a scenario economic viability will increasingly depend on the abilities of societies to harness the skills of workers who would have traditionally exited from the labour force in their 60s. This will have implications for training policies, training facilities and training methodologies.

A 1998 OECD report also provides further support for the theme that OECD countries will have to increasingly depend on the skills provided by older workers. This will require a conscious effort to ensure that the skills of older workers are upgraded, renewed or transported to new contexts to meet future skill demands. This report also notes that those workers with higher education and a background of participating in in-house training appear to be 'good training prospects' (OECD 1998, p. 123).

Health and productivity

Although it is difficult to make generalisations about the effects of ageing on a person's productivity because of the large variation within a particular age cohort, it is fair to say that health is one of the most influential effects on productivity within age groups—differences in productivity are strongly related to poor health. The probability of poor health and disability rises with age, and these factors have generally affected decisions to retire for substantial numbers of older workers (Bound et al. 1997, Burkhauser et al. 1997 both cited in OECD 1998). However OECD countries have experienced increased levels of longevity which have also been accompanied by decreased levels of poor health (Manton et al. 1997 cited in OECD 1998).

Increased levels of healthy longevity in OECD countries means that individuals can be productive at ages that were traditionally associated with a slowing down of physical and mental abilities before death. Workers who retire at 60 or 65 years may expect to live almost another 20 years. This extended period means that they will have to make sure that their income (be it from pension or superannuation) will be able to afford them a decent standard of living. They will also need to keep themselves active in order to maintain high levels of cognitive abilities and continued health.

A discussion paper produced for the Denver Summit on active ageing (Denver Summit 1997) reports that in the United States only one in five Americans of 65 years of age or beyond had a 'chronic functional disability'. This pattern of increased longevity and decreased disability in this age group is repeated in the United Kingdom, Canada, and France. The paper called for a paradigm shift which altered traditional views of ageing as 'synonymous with dependency' and recognised the aspirations of many older people to remain economically productive or to remain involved in socially productive pursuits in meaningful ways.

Extended life expectancy at birth may mean extra difficulties for family units. Carnoy and Castells (1997) believe that as parents now need to plan for survival far past the adulthood of their offspring, this will also place more pressures on the solidarity of the family across generations. Information about adult caregivers shows that responsibility for caring for elderly parents may provide conflicts with the work responsibilities of workers (Denver Summit 1997).

The importance of part-time work

Part-time work has increased for men and women in the majority of OECD countries. The Geneva Association (1997) reported that the 1996 proportion of part-time to total employment in Australia, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States was about or just over the 20 per cent mark. For countries such as the Netherlands this was well over 30 per cent. In all countries the proportion of part-time work has increased since 1990. Further information of the increase in part-time work in OECD countries is provided by Carnoy and Castells (1997). Most part-time workers are women.

Although part-time work may not provide benefits to those who would like to or need to work full time, it has special benefits for employers, young and older workers, and for governments. For employers it has been found to increase productivity and reduce absenteeism. For young people it provides them with experience of work as they prepare to enter the full-time workforce, and provides an opportunity for older workers to phase in gradual retirement as they prepare to exit the workforce. For governments it provides a strategy for reducing high levels of unemployment. For example France, Netherlands and Germany have implemented policies to promote part-time work by providing employers with incentives to hire part-time workers, and for protecting equal rights of part-time workers to social benefits and continuing professional training and promotion (Geneva Association 1997).

The Geneva Association predicts the continued expansion of part-time work in OECD countries. The association believes that the major factors for this increase are the expanding service sector, women's increased participation in the labour market, and the need for firms to be able to increase productivity at certain times, without increasing the high overheads required by a full-time workforce.

6 Pension reforms and support for older workers

In 1996 Germany implemented a partial retirement policy, that allowed workers at the age of 56 to decide, in conjunction with their employers, to decrease their weekly hours by half. Employers who were prepared to increase the part-time wages of workers by 20 per cent and to continue contributions to the pension scheme at the rate of 90 per cent of full-time wages, would be eligible to receive financial incentives. These incentives would flow to employers if they also could also show that vacancies created by these arrangements would be filled by an unemployed person or by a trainee. These arrangements were to be agreed to by unions and by management for the various industry sectors. By 1997 there were 50 sectors with these agreements in place. By 1999 these practices were being re-evaluated in view of the high cost of public pensions for early retirements.

In 1999 the Pension Reform Act was passed to base pension entitlements on demographic factors which acknowledged the longer period of pension entitlements associated with life expectancy. In addition disability pensions were reduced before the age of 63 by 0.3 per cent for each month of early retirement up to the value of 10.8 per cent.

Japan, Germany, Austria and France have provided wage subsidies for firms who hire older workers. However these reforms have not always been successful. This is because they were not adequate to encourage workers to hire older workers, and did not generate extra jobs, or because the skills of older workers were not suitable to meet employment needs (Moore, Tilson & Whitting 1994). Japan had the best track record of putting in place measures for protecting the employment of older workers. Pension reform measures have also been implemented in Italy where the length of contribution periods for pensions has been extended.

In all advanced economies, the ageing of the population profile requires arrangements for ensuring sufficient income for growing numbers of retirees without increasing the taxation burden of workers. Clark (1996) reports on a survey conducted in Japan, the country with the most rapidly ageing population profile, which showed that although Japanese people expected their earnings to be a major part of their retirement income, they were concerned about the employment opportunities available to them to acquire this income. In addition the survey found that respondents agreed to increasing social security taxes rather than decreasing retirement pensions, and raising the age of eligibility for these retirement benefits. Moore, Tilson and Whitting (1994) further report that older workers in Noway and Sweden have decided to continue to work or to retire, basing the decision on what suits their economic interest.

Dealing with the cognitive and physical effects of ageing

The cognitive effects of ageing

Training older workers needs to take account of their physical and cognitive capacities to perform and learn new skills. Warr (1997) believes that if we are to implement reforms which will ensure older workers will be well-placed to participate in a changing workplace, we must recognise some mistaken assumptions often made about the work abilities of older people. He points to studies that show no significant differences between the job performance of older and younger workers, nor are there significant differences in turnover of staff, absenteeism and injuries. Employers need to apply strategies which capitalise on the wisdom and knowledge of older people, Warr suggests. However, he says they should recognise that some aspects of physical capacity will decline with age. Browning (1995) also reports that older people perform better when tasks have a practical application and are performed in an authentic or realistic context.

Salthouse (1992) presents data from laboratory tasks to show that there is some gradual decline associated with age in digit substitution tasks. He concludes that this demonstrates a gradual slowing down of information processing in all adults as they age. Further studies by Salthouse and Fristoe (1996) support this conclusion. In a follow-up to the 1992 study already mentioned, Salthouse (1993) investigated the relationship between speed of information processing and knowledge in young and old adults. He found that although young adults were faster than old adults in certain laboratory tasks, older adults had higher levels of relevant knowledge. However, higher levels of relevant knowledge improved the performance in these tasks for both young and old adults.

Drawing on the work of Labovie-Viev, Browning (1995, p. 410) goes on to say that there 'is no scientific reason why older people cannot go on to live independently and study at any advanced level . . . the challenge for researchers, practitioners, and older students is to find new ways of exploring the potential and resourcefulness of old age.'

Longitudinal studies of ageing

The Salthouse findings are generally based on the analysis of cross-sectional data. Longitudinal studies of ageing provide a different perspective. Bray and Howard (1983) report on a 20-year study of young managers employed at American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T). This study was mounted in 1956 and continued until 1977, when a modified version of the study commenced.

Participants were put through assessment centres to get an initial picture of their cognitive skills and personal attributes. Also included in the original assessment was medical information. Participants were then interviewed annually. In addition information on their performance was collected from other relevant individuals in the organisation. Eight years after their first assessment they were brought back to an assessment centre and re-tested. After this they were interviewed on a three-year basis. At the 20-year mark participants were in their 40s and at different stages of their careers. Another assessment centre process was conducted.

There were two groups of workers in the original sample: college graduates and young managers without formal qualifications who had been working with the company and had entered supervisory or managerial positions. They had an average age of about 25 years. Almost two-thirds of the college graduates had achieved above the median in their graduating class, and had gone to superior schools. Like the non-college graduates they aspired to job security, and accelerated promotion. However where the college graduates wanted approval from peers and employers, non-college graduates were less dependent on this approval. Where the college graduates had scored at high levels in the School and College Ability Test (SCAT), non-college graduates had performed in the lowest quartile. Eight years later both groups had improved their scores on the SCAT test. These findings lend some support to theories which posit that increases in intellectual skills can be evident past young adulthood and into mid-life.

As with other similar studies, this longitudinal study shows that those who had started out with higher skill levels and aspirations had also progressed to higher levels. Support for the importance of individual differences in intellectual development is also provided by Bischof (1969 cited in Merriam and Caffarella, p. 190). According to Bischof 'the best evidence seems to indicate that if he starts as a clever young pup, he is very likely to end up as a wise old hound.'

Further evidence of the ability of adults to maintain their intellectual abilities as they age is provided in Merriam and Caffarella (1999). They draw on studies to show that 'significant reductions in intelligence do not occur in most people until their eighties or nineties, and not for all abilities or for all individuals' (Merriam & Caffarella 1999, p. 190)

The Australian Longitudinal Study of Ageing has been following the ageing process in 2087 people aged 65 to 102 since 1992. The study tests memory, language, self-esteem, depression, morale and sense of control in respondents on an annual basis. In a recent public address Professor Maria Luszcz of the Centre for Ageing Studies at Flinders University reported that the elderly frequently experience loss of income, structural barriers, and increased physical limitations. Although the study shows that the greatest fear of older Australians is the fear of dementia, it also points to high levels of psychological health. Luszcz claims that there is great variation in when and the rate at which individuals begin to feel old. 'We all become slower not only physically, we think slower' (Williams 1999, p. 48). However findings from other experimental studies conducted by Luszcz (1998) show that age per se cannot be taken to predict physical or cognitive functioning. She provides findings that support the claim that there is increasing heterogeneity in cohorts as they age. Individual differences in the processing of information and 'intra-personal resources' in terms of general ability, verbal ability and emotional disposition must also be taken into consideration when considering the effects of ageing on memory. Luszcz found that the losses were mainly attributed to those in the older age groups, or those who were experiencing some trauma or challenge. In another study Bryan, Luszcz and Crawford (1997) found that although speed of information processing decreased as people get older, their verbal fluency remained stable.

Rendell and Thomson (1994) investigated memory in 80 adults between the ages of 20 and 80. These researchers found that older adults were more accurate than younger adults in tasks which required them to perform a simple action at regular times during the day over the course of two weeks. They were more likely to be on time than younger subjects. In addition if they were late they were also nearer to the expected time than were their younger counterparts.

However, they were not as strong as younger adults in remembering if an action had been completed.

Although the health of the ageing population has improved in recent decades, the risk of disability and poor health increases with ageing. The discussion paper prepared for the Denver Summit (1997) draws on data from the 1989 National Long-term Care Survey to show that about half of the primary carers of older people who have chronic disabilities are spouses who themselves are 65 years of age or over. The paper also reports that responsibility for care-giving and volunteering has become the 'domain' of older citizens. Also reported are the results of a 1992 survey which showed that during the week prior to the administration of the survey about half of the respondents (aged 55 years and over) provided unpaid help with house work and child care for children and grandchildren.

Drawing on information from research in Canada and Japan the Denver Summit discussion paper speculates about the prospect of increasing conflict being experienced by workers and their need to care for family members. Two-thirds of older retired caregivers (age 55 years and over) in the National Long-term Care Survey, reported that they did not find their caring responsibilities a burden. However other surveys show that caregivers who were employed often had to make adjustments to their daily work routines to fit in their obligations for caring. In Japan the number of caregivers needing to resign from their jobs to look after ageing relatives has increased. A similar trend was highlighted by research in Canada which showed that just over 10 per cent of retired women had retired in order to provide care for family members.

These care-giving roles place older people in situations where they may have to administer first aid, communicate with medical practitioners, administer medicines and provide companionship. These roles require knowledge and understanding as well as a willing disposition. Training to address the needs of caregivers need also to be taken into account when discussing the training needs of older workers.

The physical effects of ageing

It is generally accepted that there is great variation amongst the physical capacities and health of individuals as they age. De Zwart's study (1997) of musculoskeletal complaints also found that increasing age brings along with it decreased capacity for physical work. This was exhibited by evidence of reduced aerobic and muscular capacity, and increased probability of long-term health problems of workers in physically demanding jobs. To deal with this problem de Zwart suggests occupational health strategies for all workers in physically demanding occupations. These include:

- changing the nature of the organisation of work tasks
- implementing effective career planning strategies. This might mean that individuals change to less physically stressful jobs as they get older

- decreasing the amount of time that is spent in physically demanding tasks
- improving the amount of physical exercise that is taken by employees

In a study of 6257 of employees aged 45 years and over Ilmarinen (1997) found that their work abilities were affected by four major interacting factors. These were:

- biological ageing
- health
- work
- lifestyle

Ilmarinen (1997) reports that lifestyle, work and ageing affected health and the gravity of disease. In cases where no disease was present the rate of ageing was affected by lifestyle and work. This means then that within an individual cohort of older people there will be great variability in the way they adapt to increasing age.

Ilmarinen (1997) also reports on results achieved by a project implemented by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health between 1991 and 1996, which was aimed at increasing the work capacity of older workers. This project implemented programs to decrease physical work loads, and the effects of poor work postures and repetitive movements for older workers at work. In addition the project also introduced innovative work time and age management arrangements and increased opportunities for workers to undertake regular physical exercise. Ilmarinen reports that these strategies have improved the work ability of workers, and their productivity and quality of life. In addition preventative measures experienced during work, have also been found to contribute to 'a meaningful, independent, and active Third Age' (Ilmarinen 1997, p. 3). These strategies are then aimed to adjust the needs of the workplace to the older worker. However the great variability within age groups with respect to health, mental alertness, and physical strength will require more flexible and individualised solutions.

Stereotypes of older workers

Plett and Lester (1991) report the negative and positive stereotypes that attach to older workers. Negative stereotypes describe them as being harder to train, less able to keep abreast of or adapt to technological changes, having more accidents, being less likely to be promoted, and less motivated. Drawing on research findings from empirical studies of absenteeism, memory, intelligence, ability to fit in, and job satisfaction Bennington and Tharenou (1996) found that these negative stereotypes were not supported by the research evidence.

Positive stereotypes describe older workers as being more informed, co-operative, conscientious and reliable. A study conducted of small business managers by Saunders and Bradley (1990) found that employers supported these positive stereotypes of their older workers. A study of 240 employers commissioned by the National Council on the Aging in the United States

(Wagner 1997) found that the majority of respondents found older workers to be reliable, conscientious and careful in completing tasks. In addition they accounted for fewer on-the-job injuries, and less absenteeism than younger workers. About a quarter of the respondents were concerned that older workers may have skills that are out of date, and that they may not be willing to undertake more complex tasks. Well over a half of the respondents in this study indicated that they did not have information on how to go about recruiting these older workers. This was especially the case for business services, health and retail. Concerns about the skill levels of older workers were identified as a major barrier to employment for 50 per cent of the respondents.

Plett and Lester (1991) report that when the Grumman Corporation had to retrench 17 000 workers it based these retrenchments on work performance. After the retrenchments were made the average age of the workers who remained had increased from 37 years to 45 years. They used this information to support their belief in the equivalent and in some cases superior work abilities of older workers.

In addressing the perception in society that older workers are less in need of employment than younger workers, the chair of the Canadian Network for Experienced Workers, James Thornton, noted that the majority of older workers still had financial commitments for accommodation, and maintaining and educating children. Few had adequate savings to retire early. In addition the 1994 rate of poverty among Canadians of 55 years and over had increased by 4.5 per cent over that of the previous year (Options 45+ 1996).

However older workers do not comprise a homogeneous group. Plett and Lester (1991) report that the work patterns of older workers (55 years and over, and in some cases 50 years and over) vary more greatly than those for other age groups. These patterns vary according to social, economic and family situations and commitments, work history, health status and planning for the future. However Plett and Lester (1991) also confirmed that these workers are more likely to become retrenched, spend more time in unemployment, and find it difficult to become re-employed. They are also more likely to have lower levels of formal education and to believe that they can not learn new skills.

Although older workers have been found not to attend training to the same extent as younger workers (VandenHeuvel 1999, OECD 1998) Plett and Lester (1991) believe that this may be related to negative stereotypes promoted by employers, trainers, society at large and by older people themselves. Imel (1991) reports findings from a 1996 survey of 400 human resource specialists which showed that just under 20 per cent of the respondents rated ability to learn new skills in older workers either as 'excellent' or 'very good'. In addition only 10 per cent of these respondents believed that older people were at ease with new technology. Imel (1991) also reports the findings of other surveys by the Office of Technology Assessment in the United States which showed that personnel officers believed that older workers did not want to be trained, and that they experienced difficulties in learning new concepts, and techniques. Drawing on the work of Falconer and Rothman and Steinberg et al. (Walker 1997) reports discriminatory practices among employers and human resource managers. Although employers perceived older workers to be less adaptable to new technology, they found them to be loyal, productive and reliable.

Overcoming negative stereotypes

Conclusions based on the stereotypes of older workers have been dispelled by corporations which have made a conscious effort to employ older workers. As well as being viewed as being resistant to further training, older workers have also been branded as being too difficult to train in new computer-based technologies used to maintain administrative processes and electronic records. Imel (1991) reports on studies which examined the ability of older workers to learn these new skills. These studies found that although older workers (50 to 84 years) may require more time and assistance in learning such skills their performance was nearly equal to those in the 20 to 39 year age group.

Imel goes on to explain that it is not always the case that older workers will take longer to learn computer skills and cites the experience of the Days Inn Corporation, a hotel chain in the United States. This corporation was having problems in staffing its operations with younger workers and was experiencing high turnovers among this age group. To overcome this problem it introduced a policy of hiring older workers (50 years and over) to take reservations in its National Reservations Centres . These older workers (which now make up 30 per cent of its workforce) were able to learn the computer software required for making reservations in the same amount of time as younger workers. In addition they remained with the company three times as long as did younger workers, and were able to increase sales by booking more reservations. Clarke and Marshall (1996) also report that these workers were asked to manage 9000 calls per day and that they made higher numbers of reservations.

Imel (1991) reports that another company which has made a specific policy to hire older workers is the American Airlines Company. This company began to hire flight attendants between the ages of 40 and 65 years. Reasons for hiring older workers were also associated with the decreased costs for superannuation benefits, and because they would not have incurred any seniority benefits they would receive similar remuneration to first-year attendants.

The bulletin of the Canadian Seniors Network (Options 45+ 1996) provides the following information on the hiring of mature workers by companies throughout the world. This is based from a report of the New South Wales Office of the Ageing.

In Australia the average age of the workforce at Technologies Services in New South Wales is 57 years. Supplying qualified engineers and technical specialists to firms requiring such assistance, the company has a policy of hiring older workers.

In Britain the second largest, national supermarket chain, Tesco, has had a mature age entry policy for its labour force since 1988. The company employs five and a half thousand staff aged 55 years and above. It implemented this policy after finding that older workers in its existing labour force were more dependable. In 1991 the largest supermarket in Britain, Sainsburys, followed suit, as did the hardware firm B & Q.

In Japan about 90 per cent of workers continue working after their retirement age. Mazda Corporation and Sony Corporation have established branches that focus on the employment of older workers and in particular older experienced engineers.

Not all companies hiring older workers or retirees are commercial companies. In the United States Clarke and Marshall (1996) report that the Seniors in Service program provides some payment to low-income seniors to provide assistance in community service areas. These include schools, child-care, elder care, public safety and environmental and human services. As well as benefiting older people this has definite benefits for the community.

Learning throughout life

Economic imperatives

The social and economic contexts of world economies have been affected in major ways by the increased globalisation of electronic media and commerce, technological advances in materials and equipment, and the restructuring of business and industry. In many countries these changes have been accompanied by increased levels of unemployment among young people, and older unskilled workers. Drawing on empirical studies which examined the relationship between new technology and work, Carnoy and Castells (1997) concluded that successful enterprises will increasing rely on individuals who are flexible, task-oriented and able to deploy a variety of skills. This means that there is a greater need for skilled workers, who are able to manage and be responsible for their own work. Carnoy and Castells (1997) report 1994 estimations made by Wood which show that although globalisation had meant improved employment and wages for skilled workers, this was not the case for unskilled workers. These developments have made it imperative for individuals and enterprises to continually update their skills if they are going to remain economically competitive.

In the past the term lifelong learning was generally associated with personal development or recreational pursuits undertaken by individuals once their mandatory or formal years of training were over. During this time educators were concerned that retired people with unlimited time on their hands would have to be helped to make use of this time through education. Where in the past lifelong learning generally alluded to learning for its own sake, today it has become synonymous with skills acquisition and upgrading for economic survival and competitiveness. The need for older workers to upgrade skills is largely related to the increased probability that they will be laid off as firms downsize to remain competitive in global markets (OECD 1998).

Older workers and retirees have upgraded skills and remained active learners throughout life through their involvement with existing learning communities or new communities of scholars. In Australia these communities have historically come under the umbrella term of Adult and Community Education (ACE). ACE programs have generally been attached in some way to existing formal educational institutions such as universities, primary and secondary schools, vocational education and training colleges, also community-based organisations such as neighbourhood houses and district councils. Since the 1970s new communities of scholars have also emerged under the auspices of the 'University of the Third Age'.

The 'University of the Third Age'

Universities of the third age (U3As) and other institutions catering for older people who want to improve on their education have sprung up in many parts of the world. Swindell (1995) and Glendenning (1998) provide a brief account of the introduction and spread of these institutions in selected countries.

First initiated in a 1973 summer school of the Science Faculty of the University of Toulouse, where the principle was to provide existing or prepackaged courses for older people, the concept of the U3A was also taken up in other countries. In the French model, courses are generally in the humanities and the arts. Senior citizens attend open lectures or workshops, access existing university courses, form study groups, go on excursions and undertake physical exercise and health programs. Funds flow from universities, local government or the individuals themselves. The emphasis in some U3As has changed from learning for pleasure to learning for work.

In England, Cambridge University adopted the concept of the U3A, but changed its format. Here the principle was based on a self-help organisation where seniors involved in the U3A identified training areas, and teaching (group leadership) was provided by those among its members who had the necessary skills and knowledge. Access to this training was improved by locating classes in local facilities, homes, libraries, and schools. The timing and delivery of training were negotiated between learners and teachers. There were no prerequisites for entry or examinations in courses which focussed on academic subjects, arts and crafts, or physical exercise.

Another factor driving the need for adult education for seniors in Britain was the realisation that almost a quarter of the people over 60 had been early school leavers. Drawing from the 1990 and 1981 studies by Abrams, Glendenning (1998) reported that few of these seniors had qualifications and had been 'alienated' from schooling due to their early experiences. In the early 1980s Peter Laslett reported 'the British, over 60, are the worst instructed people, not only among our own population, but also among the advanced western countries as a whole. They are the least educated community of native English speakers' (Glendenning 1998, p. 119). Apart from their educational need for further training, there are also social justice needs for seniors to access education and training that has been available to younger groups in the population.

These social justice needs are based on the economic histories of these elderly citizens. Midwinter (1987, p. 7 cited in Glenndenning 1998) stressed the rights of the elderly to continuing education:

> *It is a harsh irony that the present British elderly left school with precious little to show for it; they were tax and rates payers who during their working lives, subsidised the most gigantic educational bonanza in our history; that is, after 1945 and especially in the 1960s; and who on retirement have little or no call on the education service.*
>
> (Glenndenning 1998 p. 123).

In Australia the self-help model is also in operation. Swindell reports that in 1995 there were 109 individual U3A groups catering for about 26 000 older Australians. Of U3A participants in 12 groups in three States, Swindell found that almost half had completed a degree, business or technical or trade qualification. As well as the traditional activities provided by other U3As there has been a concerted effort to involve seniors as research assistants in research projects which have particular relevance for the aged and our knowledge of ageing.

Claydon (1990) speculates that if individuals are directed towards further education and are motivated to set up self-help groups, as is required by U3As then they themselves must be able to draw on energy and what he calls *cultural capital*. Claydon provides data on the educational backgrounds of participants in a U3A conference to show that more than half had a tertiary education, almost three-quarters reported being in good health, and just over half reported financial independence. They had previously been involved in professional and business occupations with the majority involved in teaching. The study of U3A participants already discussed found that the majority of them were also engaged in other forms of functional activities such as meals on wheels, charity groups, and church groups.

Glenndenning (1998) reports that in China there are about 100 million older people involved in U3As and about 5000 universities for the aged. In 1996 the Chinese government passed the Education Law which made lifelong learning mandatory. This included education for seniors. A seven-year business plan was put into place to ensure that a seniors' education network was completed. A secondary aim was to organise and help graduates after the completion of their courses to organise their own study programs.

In the United States, American Institutes for Learning in Retirement (ILRs) cater for retired learners who want to engage in non-credit academic programs. Here they are also sponsored by universities but are driven on self-help lines where learners direct the course of the organisation. Like the British system there are no prerequisites or examinations.

Learning preferences

Claydon (1990) also reports that a survey of 220 individuals who attended a U3A conference found that the most popular courses were history, philosophy, literature and current affairs. The courses most desired were literature, philosophy, languages and religious studies. When these respondents were asked what motivated them to join the U3A well over half cited reasons related to furthering self-development and learning. About a quarter mentioned social aspects of meeting others.

A recent study by the Workers Education Association (WEA) of South Australia (Binnion 1999) found that incidence of the involvement in its courses of those aged 55 years and over had increased by over 5 per cent. This had been related to the implementation of discount fees for retirees who were self-funding, specific computing programs for senior citizens, reduced fees on courses in liberal studies, and increased opportunities for seniors to attend courses during the daytime .

The study also showed that the most sought after courses for this group were liberal arts courses—archaeology, history and culture—with archaeology being the most popular. This next most popular was historical walks, followed by computer training. These findings can help us to understand the type of courses this age group is interested in pursuing and should be used to direct the efforts of continuing educators.

Separate or intergenerational learning programs

There are conflicting opinions on whether older people should be separated from the young in their pursuit of education and training. There are those who believe that they may benefit from separate training in areas such as computer skills. There are those who believe that the divisions will only serve to perpetuate divisions that are based on mistaken assumptions about the ways all older people learn. Older people today are engaged in courses leading to degrees, diplomas and certificates. They attend lectures, or complete training programs in the same way as do their younger counterparts. There is no real reason for these older individuals to be segregated in their training.

It seems that the defining issue in deciding whether or not to segregate age groups in training, be it for occupational skills acquisition, or self-development, is the capacity of the individual, their knowledge background in the particular domain rather than their age.

However it is also evident that not all old people will be willing or able to participate in late life learning. Barriers to participation include lack of mobility, lack of knowledge about what is available and the cost of participation. Other barriers include poor self-image, prevailing ideas about the ability of old people to continue to learn, and inappropriate courses, timetables, and physical sites (Cross cited in Swindell 1995).

If training institutions are to make it possible for older individuals to access training, then it is important that they provide suitable environments for adults to participate in training. For those who have had little success in school, these environments should make it possible for them to be gradually inducted back into learning through instructional methods which are non-threatening, and should build the learner's self-confidence by providing the skills needed to be successful.

The labour market experiences of older workers

During the last decade or so there has been a dramatic push in advanced economies to focus on improving the competitiveness of industry and commerce both at home and abroad. This push has been fuelled by increased globalisation of economic markets and telecommunications, advances in information and manufacturing technology, and changed work practices that are increasingly dependent on higher order skills. In Australia the changing economic landscape has also disproportionately affected the economic success of youth, people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI) and migrants from a non-English-speaking background (NESB) and those of mature workers who are generally 45 years of age or over (VandenHeuvel 1999).

Drawing on ABS data, VandenHeuvel (1999) is of the opinion that older people are becoming an increasingly more vulnerable group of workers. Her findings show that that this group of workers is the least likely to be unemployed, and the most likely to hold high status jobs. However, as a group they are more likely to have been disadvantaged in corporate downsizing operations, and often lack the qualifications that are required for new emerging occupations based around new computer and communications technology. She also provides information to show that as a group they are most likely to remain in unemployment for longer periods of time (almost twice as long as workers in the 20-24 year age group) and to find it more difficult to get a job once they become unemployed. Canadian figures also show similar trends (One Voice 1996). These issues will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on labour market participation of older workers.

Training older people for the future

Based on their analysis of the technological transformation of work and the gradual erosion of traditional support structures such as the family, unions, and communities, Carnoy and Castells (1997, p. 24) provide a pessimistic image of the worker of the 21st century. The picture of 'a free floating individual, connected on-line to a variety of task-performing organisations, ever-competing for resources and personal support, and assuming limited responsibilities towards limited people for a limited time' provides little opportunity for rejoicing for societies and individuals alike. An individual continually on the lookout for personal economic advantage will have little opportunity to develop lasting social relationships because of limited contact at work or out of work hours. They may also be unable to develop lasting and supportive relationships which will of benefit during retirement, or be able to engage in social or community activities based on social cooperation rather than competition. Such individuals may not be able to attend their children's school functions, take part in local government activities or help to look after ailing and ageing parents.

Carnoy and Castell's analysis provides a 'vision of an extraordinarily dynamic, flexible, productive economy, together with an unstable, fragile society, and an increasingly insecure individual' (Carnoy and Castells 1997, p. 53). They believe that an already fragile society can be placed into more jeopardy if continued efforts to 'liberalise economies' based on increased competition between workers and enterprises is not accompanied by attempts to put in place networks of support structures which can provide workers with some sense of stability.

Responsibility for training

The approaches to acquiring, improving or maintaining skills and knowledge we have reviewed to date place the responsibility for training on individuals or enterprises. Burke et al. (1999) are of the opinion however that there may be less and less incentive for individuals or enterprises to continue in this role. This is because the productivity increases that the Australian economy has experienced during the last ten years have taken place in a climate of deregulation of commerce and industry, the outsourcing or privatisation of government enterprises and functions, and increased competition from world markets. In turn this has been accompanied by increases in the rate of unemployment, the employment of skilled workers, the redistribution of income, and the rate of casual and part-time work. Burke et al. (1999) believe that the rise in the rate of part-time and casual employment may work against individuals and enterprises making decisions to invest in training because of limited time to 'recoup' their investment. In face of these developments Burke et al. (1999) believe that governments may have to step in to take over the responsibility for training.

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Whether governments do or do not eventually take over the responsibility for training young or older workers does not diminish the very real need for individuals to maintain or upgrade their skills in order to compete in today's labour market.

The trainability of older workers

With the advent of the information society and the increased modernisation of workplaces through persistent technological innovation, the trainability of workers whether they be young or old is becoming an increasingly important issue. It is generally felt that older workers are less likely to seek out training and feel less confident about their abilities to adjust to the new technologies. The Ilmarinen (1997) study found that older workers felt the least confident about adapting to new computer technologies and believed that younger people had the training to better learn the computer skills required in modern workplaces. He suggests that training methods which would better enable older workers to learn these skills need to be put in place if workplaces are to benefit from the 'capacities for strategy, sagacity, prudence, wisdom, reasoning and experience ' that often come with ageing (Ilmarinen 1997, p. 3).

Further evidence about the openness of older people to training in the new computer technologies is provided by James (1993). James interviewed 56 older people about their knowledge of and interest in learning about computer technologies in the areas of transport, medical treatment, household appliances, banking and computing. The findings showed that 90 per cent of the respondents believed that they had some understanding of medical technology, compared with 70 per cent for transport and appliances and 39 per cent for banking. About a third of the group wanted to learn more about medical technology and appliances, and about 20 per cent of the group were interested in improving their knowledge about banking and transportation.

However the overwhelming majority (82 per cent) claimed that they had no understanding of computers. A third of the group reported being interested or very interested in learning more about computers, with about a half of all 60 to 64 year olds, and two-thirds of 65 to 69 year olds reporting an interest in learning more about computers.

Discussion

It is in the interests of the State to extend the working lives of its citizens in order to fund support structures for their eventual retirement. However the training needs of people of 45 years of age and beyond will need to be determined in major part on whether or not they need to or want to continue to compete in the labour market.

Labour market participants will include those who need to and want to remain in the full-time or part-time workforce for the major part of their time. Non-labour market participants include those who are retired and healthy enough to be able to engage in economically productive or socially productive forms of work, or self-development activities, and those who are retired but in poor health. Within these two groups there are other subgroups which particularly relate to disadvantage and will require different strategies as they also reach old age. These subgroups include those who do not speak the major mainstream language, indigenous people, people with disabilities and prison populations.

The training needs of older labour market participants

A picture has emerged in OECD countries of increased longevity, declining rates of poor health associated with this longevity, and decreased fertility rates. This has resulted in and will continue to result in an increase in the proportion of the total population of those aged 45 years and over and a decrease in that of youth. As countries approach the first third of the 21st century these demographic changes will have implications for the way work and retirement is organised, the recruitment of older workers and their continued training. Already European countries are feeling the impact of increasing costs of pensions associated with increased longevity and are actively promoting the extension of working life. Already age discrimination legislation has been put in place in many OECD countries to preclude discrimination against age in employment practices and the legal age barriers for retirement have been removed.

This scenario provides an optimistic view for the older worker who wants to remain active in old age, and for the State—which cannot afford to pay retirement benefits or old age pensions from a public purse that is being supplied by a declining tax base. Workers who want—and financially need—to remain active in meaningful work may be able to stay economically productive for longer periods. Funding for retirement pensions continues to be buoyant. However strategies need to be put in place to deal with the older worker who cannot continue to work because of poor health.

These changes in demography have also been accompanied by a dramatic alteration of the workplace. Rapid advances in information and computer technology, the globalisation and restructuring of industry and commerce, and the need for countries to remain competitive in international markets has meant that workplaces have become more modernised and workforces have become leaner. This has increased the need for highly skilled and self-directed workers, who are able to adapt to the new technology, deal positively with constant change and be prepared to work in co-operative ways to solve problems, improve work practices and maintain productivity. Low skilled, repetitive and labour intensive jobs (e.g. textiles, clothing, footwear) have been exported to countries where labour is cheaper and restrictions are few. Job security has ceased to be a reality as private and public enterprises increasingly make use of contract labour as required.

Requirements for success and survival in the modern workplace mean that all workers will have to continue to access information and training during most of their lives. This however may not guarantee them a job. Leaner workforces and more intensive and highly skilled work may mean that they will have to work longer hours. This in turn will affect their quality of life, the quality of their personal relationships and in stressful periods affect mental and physical health.

As well as the increasing need for older workers to remain in employment longer, another trend is also becoming apparent. Those aged 45 years and over who are still in work occupy the best jobs, and have the highest labour force participation. Despite this there is increasing evidence that company downsizing and economic recession have decreased the employment prospects of people in this age group, especially that of men and unskilled older workers. They are generally more likely to be laid off, spend longer in unemployment, and find it difficult to be re-employed once they are unemployed.

In such scenarios the training needs of older workers seem clear. Like younger workers they will need to upgrade their formal qualifications, learn new skills and upgrade current skills. They will have to learn how to operate computer technologies and access information, and develop larger portfolios of computer knowledge. The specific industry areas in which this training should occur however are less clear (OECD 1998). They will have to learn the importance of flexibility and lateral thinking in the solving of problems. They will have to learn how to communicate effectively with workmates and clients and market themselves to prospective employers. They will have to learn how to deal with stress and conflict. They will need to learn how to effectively balance work with leisure time. They will have to learn to deal with constant change, and long periods where they may not be engaged in work. (This will include preparing for eventual retirement from the labour market.) Above all they need to be provided with sound training and knowledge in how best to market themselves to employers and find jobs.

Some sound advice to unemployed workers trying to get back into the workforce in this age group is provided by Richardson (1999). She urges them to create income streams through the combining of a number of part-time jobs and to examine options for self-employment (keeping in mind the high failure rate of those who have embarked on this route). She tells them to prepare résumés which will make it difficult for employers to discriminate against them because of age, and to focus on how their skills can be transferred to other places. In addition she advises them to tell as many people as possible that they are in search of a job. Over-qualified people are also urged to maintain their expectations rather than apply for simply any job which comes along.

If older workers are to be given opportunities for continued employment then employers and human resource personnel need to be convinced that older workers are worth training. This means that research evidence which combats generally held stereotypes about the performance and trainability of older workers, and information of the successes of specific corporations who have made it a policy to employ workers at older age groups needs to be made readily available.

However, most labour market participants have obligations other than work to take care of. As well as maintaining themselves in adequate physical and psychological health and fitness, they will also be involved in parenting and educating children and maintaining households, or caring for older relatives. Training for dealing with life in these non-economic areas will also be important.

Plett and Lester (1991) highlight the plight of the 'displaced homemaker'—generally women who have lost a spouse and a steady source of income. These displaced homemakers who may have spent years maintaining households, bringing up children, providing volunteer help to churches and schools, will benefit from occupational-related training which will help them to become productive workers. A first step in getting these women to take advantage of training is to help them appraise and value the skills they have acquired through their work in the home and in other social organisations.

The plight of the displaced homemaker is even greater if she does not speak the mainstream language or is from an indigenous or other ethnic background. The State will have to continue providing support programs for these individuals. Support may include provision of training in their own languages and economic support. Provisions will also be needed for people with a disability.

Like many of the authors we have already discussed, Hiemstra (1998) also believes in the uncertainty and constant change associated with today's workplaces. Accordingly he suggests that individuals will need to be helped to understand change, by learning the importance of seeing change as a growth experience and part of life. He also believes that in this way it can be looked upon as a positive rather than a negative experience. Adult educators are urged to help individuals come to terms with these transitions.

Older non-labour-market participants

The training needs of older people who do not have the economic need to continue to compete in the labour market are varied. There will be a 20-year age span between the youngest of this age group and those of the traditional age of retirement. If we take increased life expectancy into account this may give us in some cases an age span of well over 30 years. Younger people in this age group will have different needs and different health and physical capacity than those in older age groups. If they have young children they may benefit from training in parenting and educational issues. In addition they may benefit from knowing and understanding the roles associated with volunteering in social institutions (churches, schools, hospitals, nursing homes etc.) and of how their particular skills can best be used by these institutions.

People who are involved in caring for older relatives may require training in caring. This will mean dealing with health, economic and social issues. They may require training and information in appropriate nutrition, health care and other home economic issues. Where they are responsible for maintaining their own household and that of parents or relatives who have become unable to support themselves independently, they will also need knowledge of how best to balance these roles so that they maintain adequate levels of physical and mental health.

In addition, people in these age groups who no longer have responsibilities for bringing up children may be able to devote more time to self-development pursuits and leisure activities.

It should not be ignored however that this age group will have had the lowest opportunities to achieve formal qualifications. There will be some individuals who would like to pursue courses which will deliver them degrees, diplomas or certificates. This may also be another avenue for training.

Those who are ill or not mobile enough to attend courses or seminars away from the home may benefit from accessing courses or information on-line. They will need assistance in accessing such courses through internet training.

Most older people are interested in maintaining their independence. Many of them have the health and the ability to continue to care for themselves in their own homes and to make their own decisions. It is in the best interests of all societies to provide the skills and knowledge for all people to be able to maintain economic independence and adequate levels of health during their later years. It is also important for older people to understand about appropriate and adequate nutrition and strategies to overcome specific medical problems that may accompany ageing. The report of the South Australian Health Commission (1995) details strategies for helping all older people including elderly from Aboriginal backgrounds, NESB and people with a disability to enjoy a healthy old age and to be well-informed of the services available to them in the advent of poor health.

Learning for leisure versus learning for functional responsibility

Claydon (1990) is concerned that if all U3A participants enjoy learning for its own sake or for leisure rather than for any other reason, that the message that is provided to older people in retirement is that they are now divorced from the functional realities of life. Although Claydon accepts that there is nothing wrong with investing in these forms of learning, he believes that they both have 'limited durability' (Claydon 1990, p. 212) because they may only serve to increase the disengagement of the elderly from the functions of everyday life. In addition, Claydon worries about those elderly who, unlike U3A participants, are not actively engaged in any pursuit apart from sitting in pubs or cafes or in other public places, or never venturing outside their homes: 'decaying people in decaying homes' (Claydon 1990, p. 213).

According to Claydon (1990) the education of the elderly is important for three reasons: improving their economic independence, easing the financial burden on the State, and improving their quality of life. Continued emphasis on their amusement, diversion or indulgence is costly in financial, social and personal areas. The pursuit of fun and leisure takes people away from thinking about reality and the affairs of the world.

> *When we are talking about not some four per cent of over 55-year-old people who belong to U3As and similar networks, but 25 per cent of the total population, or one in four Australians, it is doubtful that we can afford let alone justify that sort of waste.* (Claydon 1990, p. 213)

Claydon's concerns provide food for thought. The intellectual force, the knowledge, the political awareness, the work histories, and wisdom of this age group in all countries should be harnessed to help to solve world economic, political and social ills. It is not enough for the elderly to be put out to pasture. They may have served their time in economic terms but they have lots more to give in terms of solving social problems.

Conclusions

This chapter has provided the context in which the training needs of older workers can be evaluated. It has given an overview of the importance of keeping older people in the workforce for extended periods—to improve their economic independence, decrease the financial burden on the State, and to improve the quality of physical, mental and psychological health in their working life and beyond. However, older workers will make up their own minds as to whether they will continue in work and whether they want to take advantage of training opportunities. Whether or not they believe the rhetoric that skills formation will help them to get a job will also depend on their experiences in the labour market. What is clear is that they will have no way of knowing whether or not increased investment in training will eventually lead them to into desired employment. Their chances in competing with all the others going for jobs will be also severely be diminished unless they show that they have upgraded their skills.

The large group of baby-boomers is growing older at the same time that opportunities for full-time jobs are decreasing. This means that for the group competition will be intensified in ways that they have not had to experience in the past when jobs were plentiful. Indeed there are some baby-boomers who may never have had to prepare a résumé or compete for a job.

What is required is training which will give them the life skills as well the occupational skills to deal with this altered world.

Carnoy and Castells make sense when they claim that just as organisations have to learn to adapt to constant change, the individual of working age will have to learn to organise his/her life without panic. Helping workers to deal with this altered state of affairs will be the essence of training.

Older people in VET

Jane Schueler

PEOPLE IN VOCATIONAL education and training (VET) are getting older. In 1998 almost half of the student population undertaking vocational training were over 30 years old. Given the ageing profile of those participating in VET, we are not well informed about the training of older people. This is primarily due to the fact that training statistics on the more mature students are generally bundled with those of younger ones. Consequently the true dynamics of this older age group are obscured.

This chapter strives to redress this situation. It presents an overview of older people in training. For the purposes of this study 'older people' refers to those persons who are over 45 years old undertaking vocational or personal enrichment programs. The first section of the chapter provides an insight into the backgrounds and participation of older people who undertook training in Australia in 1998. In section two, the motivations for training and satisfaction outcomes are examined as reported by older TAFE graduates who completed their vocational programs in 1997.

Overall, this chapter endeavours to offer a more complete view of older people in training and hopefully one which reflects the true nature of their diversity and activities.

Background

Vocational and personal enrichment programs

There are two types of VET programs: vocational and personal enrichment. These programs are differentiated by the intent of the training program. It is important to note that the intention of the student is not taken into account when determining the classification of the program.

Vocational programs are intended to develop knowledge and skills relevant to the workplace or to prepare students for such programs through, for example, general or prevocational programs. Any training undertaken which does not have vocational intent is classified as personal enrichment. Thus personal enrichment programs tend to support and develop non-vocational activities, which include social, creative or personal pursuits and skills related to the effective use of leisure time. This program type is often referred to as Stream 1000.

These training programs are also generally differentiated by their funding source. Personal enrichment programs are predominantly delivered on a fee-for service-basis. In contrast, the majority of vocational programs are publicly funded. For the purposes of this report only publicly-funded vocational programs will be examined.

The age profile

The VET national data collection has undergone major changes during this decade. In 1990, training statistics were only collected from TAFE institutes. Since this time the national training database has evolved into a comprehensive resource of information. This is the result of the introduction of a new statistical standard (AVETMISS) in 1994 and the inclusion of adult and community education providers in 1995 and private providers in 1996. The training statistics now reflect a more accurate view of total VET activity in Australia. That is, despite enhancements to the VET database, there is a clear trend emerging—people in vocational programs are getting older.

Table 2.1: The number of students ('000) in vocational programs by age group, 1990 and 1998

	1990		1998	
	Number of students ('000s)	% of students	Number of students ('000s)	% of students
19 or under	274.5	30.4	313.2	21.9
20-24	170.3	18.8	242.6	16.9
25-29	115.3	12.8	180.4	12.6
30-39	185.9	20.6	310.8	21.7
40-49	106.3	11.8	238.0	16.6
50-59	34.2	3.8	108.7	7.6
60-64	7.0	0.8	18.8	1.3
65 or over	10.6	1.2	19.6	1.4
Total stated	**904.2**	**100.0**	**1432.0**	**100.0**
Not stated	62.7		103.3	
Total	**966.8**		**1535.2**	

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

The number of people undertaking publicly-funded vocational training has increased significantly since the beginning of the decade. Between 1990 and 1998 the number of students in vocational programs has risen by almost 60 per cent to 1.5 million. During these years there have also been major shifts in the age profile of those in training. Table 2.1 shows the age distribution of vocational students. This illustrates that what was once a training environment with less than 18 per cent of people over 40 years old in 1990 has transformed to one with 27 per cent of this age group in 1998.

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It is also clear from table 2.1, that the number of people in older age groups undertaking vocational programs have grown more dramatically since 1990 than younger age groups. Within nine years the number of 50-59 years olds have trebled while the number of 40-49 year olds and those over 60 years of age have doubled. Furthermore, 30 per cent of females undertaking vocational programs are now over 40 years old while 24 per cent of males represent this age group. This is a significant change from the 21 per cent and 14 per cent respective figures for 1990.

Older people in VET programs

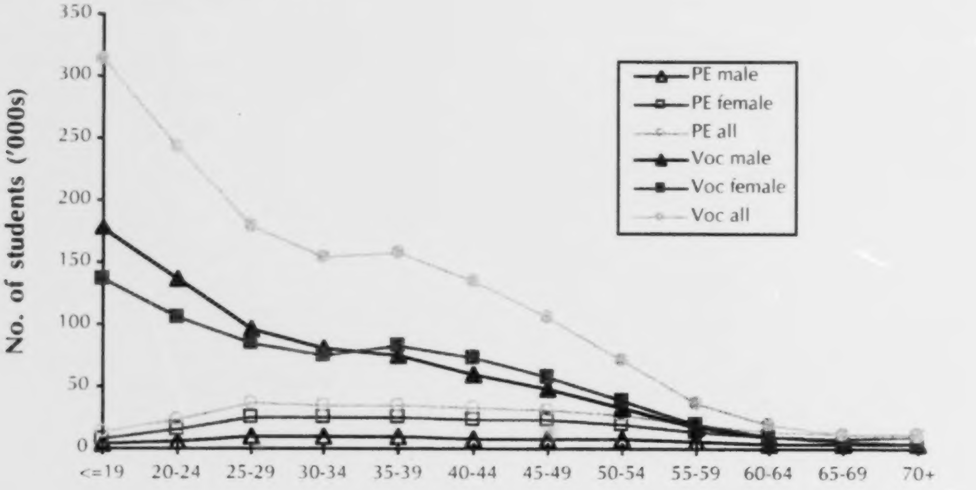
This section examines the training statistics of people over 45 years old who undertook vocational or personal enrichment programs in 1998. It presents an overview of the personal background of older people and their educational and employment profiles. In addition participation patterns are explored together with the characteristics of the training programs. A comparison of older people in vocational and personal enrichment training is featured to highlight the similarities and differences between these two types of training.

Personal characteristics

Age and gender

Figure 1 shows the number of students in vocational and personal enrichment programs in 1998. This clearly indicates that the number of people in vocational programs steadily declines with age. This decline is similar for personal enrichment programs except that there are significantly less students under 24 years old and the decrease in participation starts at a later age group of 40 to 44. It is also noticeable that despite the low representation of this age group, training continues well into the 70s.

Figure 2.1: The number of VET students ('000) in vocational programs by age group and gender, 1998



Older people are well represented in vocational and personal enrichment training. In 1998, there were 252 000 people over 45 years who undertook vocational training, while 113 000 enrolled in personal enrichment programs. 3.7 per cent of older vocational students were also undertaking personal enrichment programs, which is a trend increasing with age. With the exception of those people who are over 70 years old, figure 2.1 also shows that there are more older people in vocational programs than personal enrichment programs.

It is also noticeable that there are more older females than males in both types of training programs. In 1998, vocational programs comprised 54 per cent females and 46 per cent males while there were 2.7 times more older females in personal enrichment programs than males (73%, 27%). Older females are more prevalent in personal enrichment programs than vocational programs; however, the opposite is true for older males.

Figure 2.2: Age distribution of VET students by gender, 1998

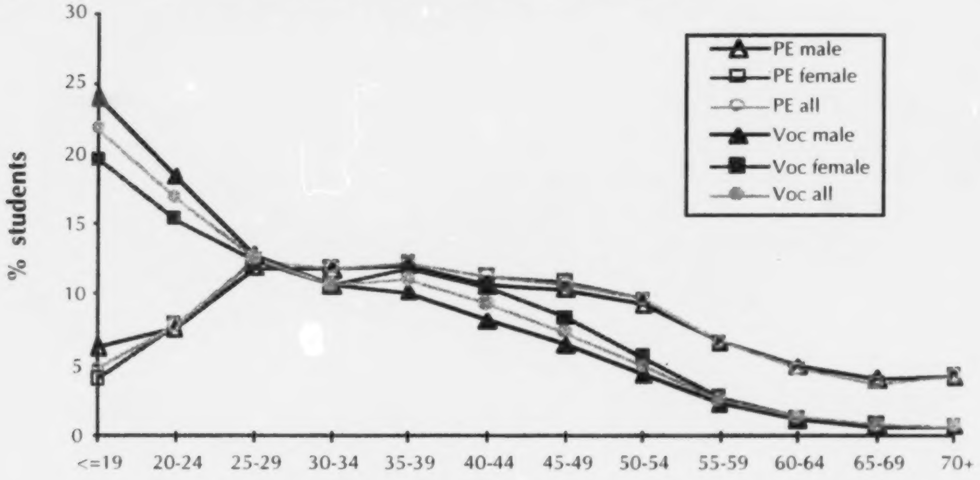


Figure 2 illustrates the age distribution of students in vocational and personal enrichment programs. This clearly shows that older people represent a far greater proportion of students in personal enrichment programs than vocational programs. Almost 40 per cent of all personal enrichment students are over 45 years old while this age group only accounts for 18 per cent of those undertaking vocational programs.

The participation of older people in the two types of training programs is also different. Figure 2.2 shows the similarities in the participation rate of older males and females who undertake personal enrichment programs. This suggests personal enrichment training is equally appealing to older males and females across all age groups. In addition there is a higher proportion of 35 to 54 year old females in vocational programs than males of the same age group. Unlike personal enrichment programs, vocational training appeals more to older females in this age group than males.

Table 2.2: Personal characteristics of older VET students, 1998

	Vocational		Personal enrichment	
	Number of students ('000s)	% of students	Number of students ('000s)	% of students
Australian	132.6	68.1	51.1	76.8
Born overseas—English-speaking	23.2	11.9	9.2	13.8
Born overseas—non-English-speaking	38.8	19.9	6.3	9.4
Total	**194.6**	**100.0**	**66.5**	**100.0**
ATSI	4.5	2.3	0.2	0.3
Not ATSI	191.1	97.7	74.4	99.7
Total	**195.7**	**100.0**	**74.6**	**100.0**
Disability	12.4	6.5	1.8	2.8
No disability	177.4	93.5	62.2	97.2
Total	**189.8**	**100.0**	**64.0**	**100.0**
Capital city	134.6	54.2	68.5	60.9
Other metropolitan	17.0	6.9	8.3	7.4
Rural	88.3	35.6	34.5	30.6
Remote	8.2	3.3	1.2	1.1
Total	**248.2**	**100.0**	**112.5**	**100.0**

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

Table 2.2 shows the proportion of older people who provided information about their country of birth, where they live and other personal details in 1998. Non disclosure of this information at the time of enrolment may explain the low representation of VET clients with these characteristics. The following discussion relates to table 2.2.

Country of birth

As indicated in table 2.2, the majority of older people in VET in 1998 were born in Australia. However almost a third of older students undertaking vocational programs and less than a quarter of older students in personal enrichment programs were born overseas. This indicates that there is a higher representation of non-Australians in vocational programs than personal enrichment programs. The likelihood that students in VET are born outside Australia also increases with age.

Almost a fifth of older people in vocational training come from a non-English -speaking country. This characteristic is particularly prevalent in older people as evidenced by the fact that they represent 21 per cent of all NESB students in vocational training and secondly because the proportion of NESB students increases with age. As reported in table 2.2, older NESB students are more likely to participate in vocational training than those born overseas from an

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English-speaking country. However this is not the case for those in personal enrichment programs, where the opposite is true. Furthermore the proportion of older NESB students in vocational training is double the proportion of students in personal enrichment programs. This suggests that older NESB students are more likely to seek vocational training.

Indigenous older students

Although 2.3 per cent of older people in vocational training identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) the number of ATSI students decreases with age. This trend is reflected in the fact that people over 45 years old only account for 10 per cent of all ATSI students in vocational training. There were relatively few older ATSI students undertaking personal enrichment programs in 1998. It is clear that older indigenous students are more likely to participate in vocational rather than personal enrichment training.

Older people with a disability

Almost 7 per cent of older people in vocational training have a disability. This is mainly a physical or to a lesser extent a hearing or visual disability. The proportion of older students reporting a disability increases with age. Therefore it is not surprising that they account for almost a quarter of all vocational students with a disability. Given the small representation of these older students in personal enrichment training, they are more likely to pursue vocational training.

Geographic region

The majority of older people in VET live in capital cities. They make up a greater proportion of older students in personal enrichment programs than vocational programs. However, there is a higher representation of older people undertaking vocational training who live in rural and remote areas compared with personal enrichment programs. Overall, older people who live in capital cities are more likely to be undertaking some form of training. Furthermore, those living in rural or remote areas are more attracted to vocational programs.

Overall, vocational training attracts older students from more diverse backgrounds. Older people who have a disability, identify as ATSI, come from NESB or live in rural or remote areas are more likely to be undertaking vocational training. However, older students who reside in cities or were born in Australia make up a higher proportion of students in personal enrichment training.

Educational level

Secondary education

Older VET students who provided details on their high school level had mainly completed Year 12. As shown in table 2.3, year 12 completion rates increase with age. This is similar for both types of training. Older people undertaking personal enrichment programs also show a significantly higher Year 12

Table 2.3: **High school level of older students by training program and age group (%)1998**

	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70+	45+ Males	45+ Females	45+ All
				Vocational					
Year 9 or lower	16.6	19.7	24.1	25.9	24.7	25.6	20.5	18.6	19.5
Year 10	33.8	32.5	29.9	25.3	22.2	19.8	30.7	32.7	31.7
Year 11	12.6	10.6	8.8	8.0	7.6	6.3	10.8	11.1	11.0
Year 12	36.9	37.2	37.1	40.8	45.5	48.3	37.9	37.6	37.8
Total ('000s)	**64.1**	**40.3**	**18.9**	**8.4**	**4.1**	**3.1**	**66.6**	**72.2**	**138.8**
				Personal enrichment					
Year 9 or lower	5.5	5.5	7.6	7.5	7.7	9.2	9.8	6.1	6.8
Year 10	15.5	12.5	11.2	8.3	7.1	4.5	15.1	10.0	10.9
Year 11	7.4	4.7	4.0	3.5	2.9	1.8	6.1	4.2	4.6
Year 12	71.5	77.3	77.1	80.6	82.3	84.4	69.0	79.7	77.7
Total ('000s)	**4.9**	**4.8**	**2.9**	**2.2**	**2.0**	**2.7**	**3.9**	**15.5**	**19.5**

completion rate than those in vocational programs. With the exception of students over 65 years old personal enrichment students have double the Year 12 completion rate than those in vocational programs. It is evident that older people who have completed Year 12 are more likely to be undertaking some form of training. Furthermore, older students in personal enrichment programs are more educated in terms of their secondary schooling than those in vocational programs.

Year 12 completion rates are similar for older males and females in vocational programs. This is unlike personal enrichment programs where older females have a higher completion rate than males. In terms of secondary education, older females in personal enrichment programs are better educated than older males but in vocational programs there is no significant difference.

Also noticeable is the 20 per cent of older students in vocational programs who have completed Year 9 or less. In comparison, there is a relatively small proportion of older personal enrichment students with this level of education. Table 2.3 indicates that the Year 9 completion rates of older vocational students are three times higher than those in personal enrichment programs across all older age groups. This demonstrates that older people with a lower secondary education are more likely to be undertaking vocational programs than personal enrichment programs.

Post-school education

Older people studying vocational programs are more likely to have completed post-school qualifications than those in personal enrichment programs. This is clearly demonstrated in table 2.4. Forty-five per cent of older vocational students providing these details had completed post-school qualifications compared with 28 per cent of older personal enrichment students. This indicates older people in vocational programs are better educated than those in personal enrichment programs. Furthermore, there are more older males with post-school qualifications than females in both types of training which also suggests that older males in training are generally better educated than females. Table 2.4 also

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Table 2.4: Proportion of older VET students with post-school qualifications by age group (%), 1998

	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70+	45+ Males	45+ Females	45+ All
				Vocational					
Post school	47.9	46.1	43.5	39.4	33.6	31.0	49.9	41.0	45.1
No post-school	52.1	53.9	56.5	60.6	66.4	69.0	50.1	59.0	54.9
Total ('000s)	**70.8**	**46.9**	**23.5**	**11.3**	**6.3**	**4.9**	**76.5**	**87.1**	**163.7**
				Personal enrichment					
Post school	35.9	31.7	29.6	24.3	18.8	14.6	37.1	25.9	28.3
No post-school	64.1	68.3	70.4	75.7	81.2	85.4	62.9	74.1	71.7
Total ('000s)	**14.0**	**12.9**	**8.6**	**6.6**	**5.2**	**6.3**	**11.9**	**41.4**	**53.6**

shows that the likelihood of older people completing post-school qualifications declines with age. It is evident that older people with post-school qualifications are more likely to be undertaking some form of training than those with no qualifications.

Older people in vocational programs have a more varied post-school education background than those in personal enrichment programs. Of the older people in vocational programs who had post-school qualifications, more than a third had completed a general certificate course, almost a quarter a trade qualification and more than a fifth a degree or post-graduate qualification. In contrast, almost all of these older students in personal enrichment programs had completed a trade qualification (95.9%). This indicates that older people with a tertiary education are more likely to participate in vocational training while those with a trade background are more likely to undertake personal enrichment training.

In summary, the educational profile of older people in these two types of training programs are different. Older students in personal enrichment programs have a higher level of Year 12 completion while those in vocational programs are more likely to have completed post-school qualifications. Furthermore although the Year 12 completion rates are similar for older males and females in vocational programs, older females in personal enrichment programs are better educated in terms of secondary schooling than males. However older males in VET are better educated in terms of post-school qualifications.

Employment status

The majority of older people in VET providing information on their employment status are employed. More than two-thirds of older students in vocational programs and sixty one percent of those in personal enrichment programs are working. As shown in figure 2.3, older people who are full-time employed are more likely to participate in training than those in other employment categories. Furthermore full-time older workers are more likely to seek vocational rather than personal enrichment training.

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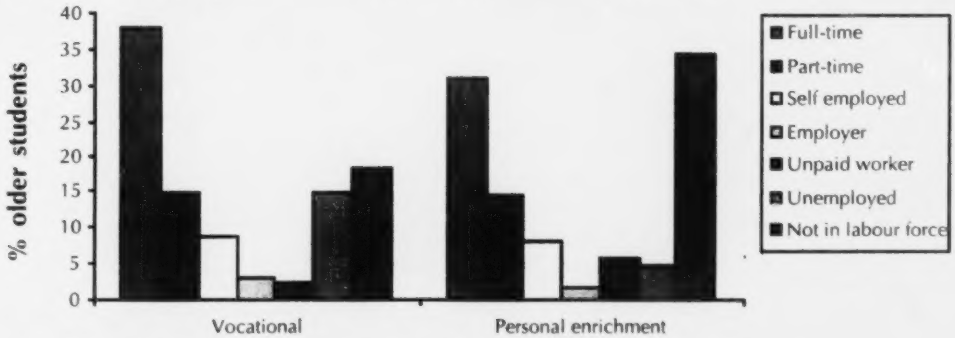
Figure 2.3 also shows that part-time older workers and older people who are self employed are equally attracted to both types of training programs. There are twice as many older males who are self employed undertaking training than older females. However, there is a higher representation of older part-time female workers in training. Older females also account for most of the unpaid workers who tend to pursue personal enrichment training.

Figure 2.3: Employment status of older VET students (%), 1998



Older people who are unemployed are three times more likely to be undertaking vocational training than personal enrichment training. It is evident that these older students seek vocational programs to improve their job prospects.

Older students no longer in the labour force make up more than a third of those undertaking personal enrichment programs and almost a fifth of older people in vocational programs. Although these older people account for 34 per cent of older students in personal enrichment programs, they also seek personal development through vocational training programs.

The employment status of older people changes with age. The number of older full-time workers in VET declines while the number of older people who are self employed or who have their own business increases. In addition, the representation of unpaid female workers, part-time male workers and those no longer in the labour force undertaking training also increases with age.

Participation in training programs

Training providers

In 1998, almost two-thirds of older people undertook their vocational training at TAFE while more than a quarter attended training with a community based training provider and less than seven percent at a registered provider.
Figure 2. 4 shows the proportion of students undertaking training in the three training sectors by age group. This illustrates that participation in vocational programs delivered by community providers sharply increases with age. In contrast the number of students at TAFE significantly declines, while participation at other registered providers shows a steady decline. Although

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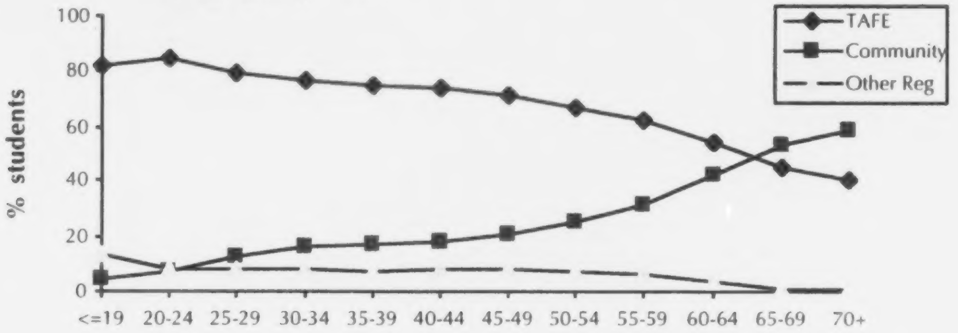
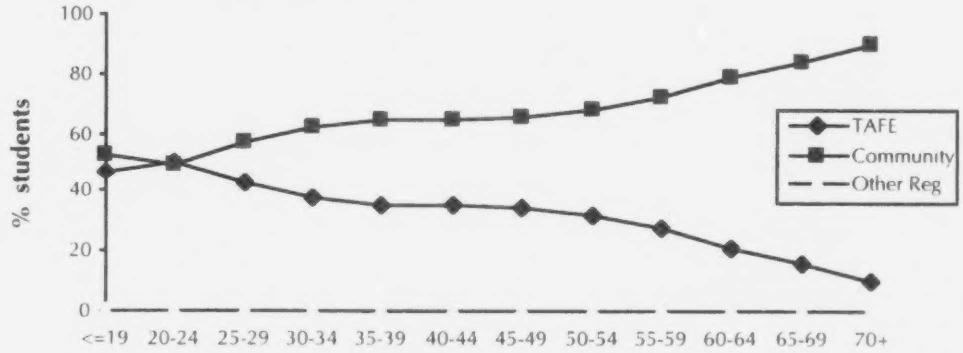
students primarily go to TAFE to undertake vocational training, those over 65 years old are more likely to attend community-based vocational training. Furthermore, significantly more males attended training at TAFE and registered providers than females (71.5%, 60.5%; 8.4%, 5.0%). Older females were more attracted to vocational training provided by community-based providers than males (34.5%, 20.1%).

Figure 2.4: Proportion of vocational students by training provider type and age group, 1998



These findings show a clear trend. They suggest that although the majority of vocational training is conducted at TAFE, community training providers delivering vocational programs become much more attractive to potential students with age. This is particularly the case for females and those students who are over 65 years old.

Figure 2.5: Proportion of personal enrichment students by training provider type and age group, 1998



Unlike vocational programs, the majority of older people undertook personal enrichment training with community-based training providers. Almost three quarters of older students attended training with the adult and community education (ACE) sector while more than a quarter enrolled at TAFE. There were relatively few students enrolled in personal enrichment programs delivered by other registered providers. However, similar to students in vocational training, the proportion of people attending ACE for personal enrichment training

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increases with age while for those studying at TAFE it declines. This is evident from the illustration in figure 2.5. Also, similar to vocational programs, more older females undertook training at community based training organisations than males while TAFE was more popular with older males than females (78.9%, 60.8%; 39.1%, 21.1%). With the exception of students under 20 years old, people mainly go to ACE for personal development. This trend increases with age.

Overall, older people tend to go to TAFE for vocational programs and to community-based providers for personal enrichment programs. However, both training programs delivered by community-based providers become more appealing with age. This is particularly the case for females.

Course of study

Qualifications

Almost a quarter of older people in vocational programs were undertaking non-award courses while 15 per cent were studying programs offering a statement of attainment. These short vocational programs make up more than 40 per cent of their training activity. Furthermore there were more older females enrolled in non-award courses than males but slightly less in terms of statement of attainment (26.4%, 22.6%; 13.5%, 17.7%).

In total 41 per cent of older people were undertaking AQF nationally recognised programs. This mainly comprised 5 per cent of older students enrolled in Certificate I, 11 per cent in Certificate II, 12 per cent in Certificate III, 7 per cent in Certificate IV and 5 per cent in diplomas. There were more older females undertaking AQF qualifications than older males (42.4%, 39.6%). In particular more older females undertook Certificate III than older males (13.4%, 10.2%). However there were slightly more older males in Certificate IV compared with older females (7.9%, 6.9%).

These findings suggest that older people are equally likely to be undertaking short vocational programs or nationally recognised qualifications.

Field of study

Personal enrichment and vocational programs differ in their structure. While vocational programs generally consist of a number of modules associated with a course of study, personal enrichment programs primarily consist of one module. Therefore comparisons between these two types of training programs are more appropriate at the module level. For this reason, only an analysis of the fields of study for vocational programs is reported. A comparison of module training activity follows this discussion.

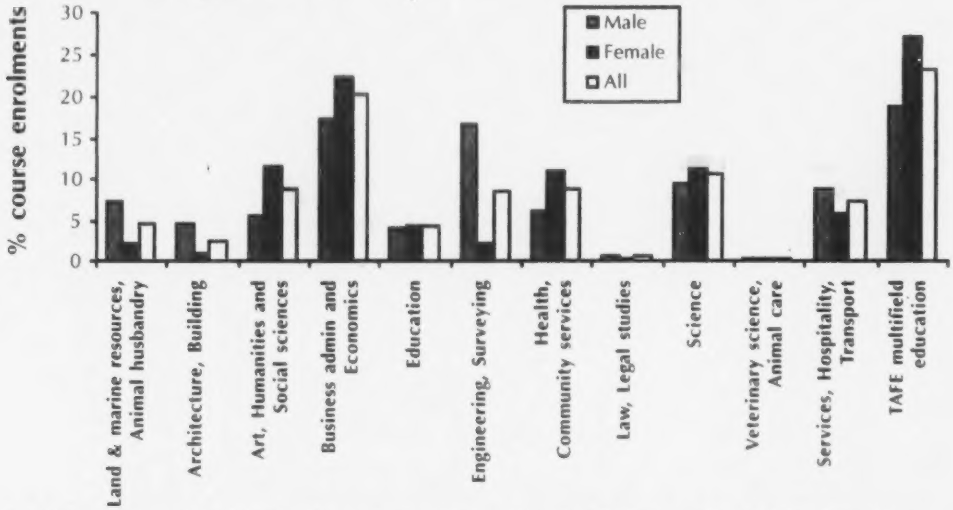
In 1998, people over 45 enrolled in 315 000 vocational courses. This accounted for 16.2 per cent of all course enrolments in vocational programs in Australia. Figure 2.6 shows the distribution of course enrolments for older students in vocational programs by the field of study. The most popular fields of study for older people in vocational programs based on courses with the highest enrolments were:

- TAFE multi-field education (23.2%)
- business, administration and economics (20.1%)
- science (10.6%)

These three fields of study make up more than 50 per cent of all course enrolments for this older age group in vocational programs. This suggests that older people target courses which offer basic education, business management and IT.

The level of participation in vocational programs varies for older males and females. There is a higher female participation in TAFE multi-field education, business, administration and economics and science fields of study than males. Older males show a greater interest in engineering/surveying fields while arts, humanities and social sciences and health, community service courses are more popular with older females.

Figure 2.6: Course enrolments of older vocational students by field of study and gender, 1998



The pattern of participation in vocational programs also changes with age. Participation in TAFE multi-field education, arts, humanities and social sciences and science fields increase with age. However female participation in business, administration and economic courses decreases together with interest in the health and community services field. Male participation in engineering/surveying courses also declines with age while the proportion of enrolments in the business, administration and economics field does not begin to decline until the 54 to 59 age group. Overall this indicates that vocational courses which provide basic education skills, personal development and IT content become more important with age while interest in business, health and engineering has less priority.

Training activity

Training hours

In 1998, older people undertook 33.7 million hours of training. Vocational training constituted 30.6 million of these hours 3.1 million training hours were undertaken in personal enrichment training. Given that older people spend only 9 per cent of total training hours in personal enrichment programs, they are more likely to invest in vocational training. They commit almost ten times more hours to vocational training than personal enrichment training. However the total training hours of older students in vocational training only represents 10 per cent of vocational training activity in Australia while 38 per cent of personal enrichment training activity is attributable to older students.

Module enrolments

Older people in vocational programs enrolled in 1.1 million modules in 1998 which represented 10 per cent of total module enrolments in vocational programs. Personal enrichment enrolments totalled 184 000 and older students accounted for 37 per cent of all personal enrichment module enrolments in 1998. Older people in vocational programs undertook six times more modules than those in personal enrichment programs. Once again the evidence suggests that older people are more likely to undertake vocational rather than personal enrichment programs.

Figure 2.7: Vocational module enrolments of older students by areas of learning and

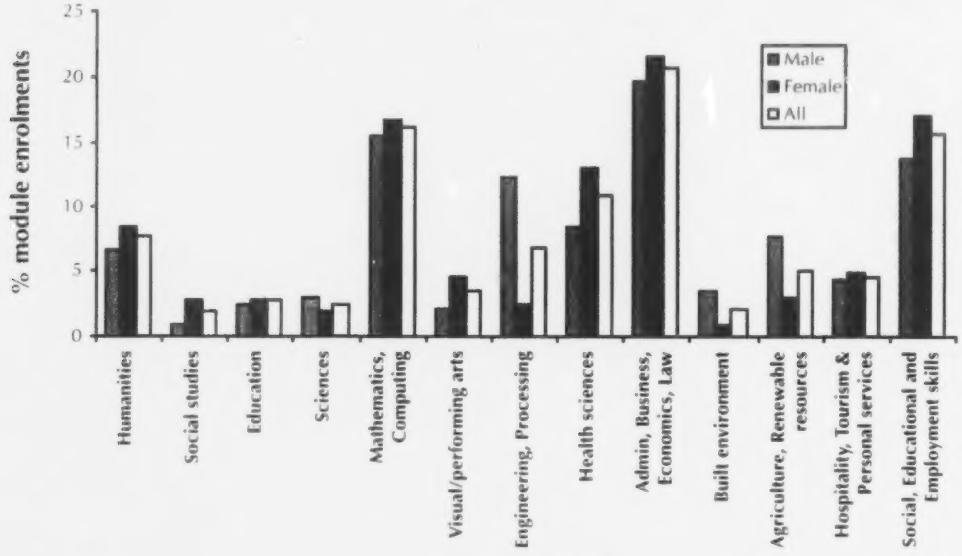


Figure 2.7 shows the distribution of module enrolments for older students in vocational programs in the thirteen areas of learning. Based on the highest number of enrolments, older people in vocational programs are primarily participating in the following areas:

- administration, business, economics and law (20.7%)
- mathematics/computing (16.1%)
- social, educational and employment skills (15.6%)

The popularity of these areas of learning suggests that older people are predominantly accessing vocational programs to acquire business skills, develop or update computing skills and undertake training for employment purposes.

The level of participation differs for older males and females. Females show a higher participation in administration, business and economics, social, educational and employment skills and mathematics/computing areas compared with males. In contrast, there are relatively more older males enrolled in engineering/processing areas while health sciences is the fourth most popular area for older females.

The most popular areas of learning for personal enrichment programs is quite different to those in vocational programs. As shown in figure 2.8, based on the highest enrolments, older people in personal enrichment programs are primarily participating in the following areas:

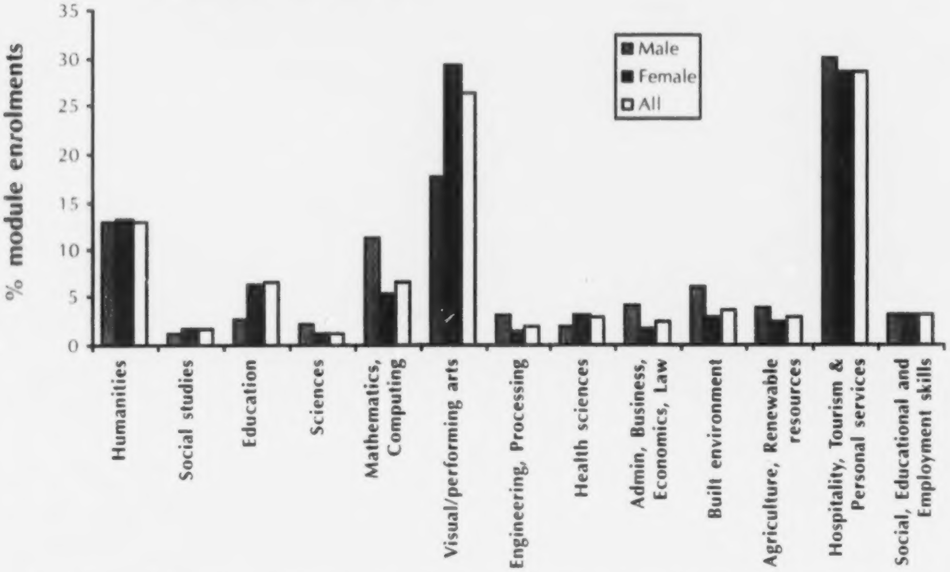
- hospitality, tourism and personal services (28.4%)
- visual/performing arts (26.2%)
- humanities (13.0%)

These findings suggest physical pursuits in the form of recreation and outdoor activities, sport and fitness and relaxation techniques are most important to older people. Participation in creative pursuits is also of great interest, while language and literary studies are of secondary importance.

The pattern and rate of participation in the areas of learning differs by gender. Older males have a greater interest in hospitality, tourism and personal services, mathematics/computing and the built environment than females. Although the older male and female participation in the humanities area is comparable, the visual/performing arts and education areas are not as popular with males.

Interest in humanities increases with age. In addition the popularity of mathematics and computing with older males also increases with age while female interest in this area and the hospitality, tourism and personal services declines. These findings indicate that language and literary studies become more important to older people. Furthermore, older males increasingly attend personal enrichment training to acquire computing skills and females become less interested in physical pursuits with age.

Figure 2.8: **Personal enrichment module enrolments of older students by areas of learning and gender, 1998**



It is clear that older people undertaking vocational and personal enrichment programs differ in their personal characteristics, educational background and employment profile. However these training programs complement each other in servicing the training needs of older students. while the engineering, health sciences, business and social, educational and employment skill areas are popular with older people in vocational programs, personal enrichment programs offer visual/performing arts and hospitality, tourism and personal services. There is however some choice for older people interested in the mathematics/computing and humanities areas. They are able to acquire computing skills and humanities related skills through either vocational or personal enrichment programs.

Older TAFE graduates

Older TAFE graduates' profile

A graduate destination survey (GDS) was conducted by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in 1998. All graduates who had completed a certificate, advanced certificate, associate diploma, advanced diploma or a bachelor's degree of at least 200 hours or one semester's duration at a TAFE institute in 1997 were included in the survey. In total 120 755 TAFE graduates were surveyed of whom 66 607 responded, a national response rate of 55 per cent. Of these graduates 8870 or 13.3 per cent were over 45 years old.

These older TAFE graduates have a similar profile to the older VET students currently in training, as featured in the previous section. There were significantly more older females who graduated than males (62%, 38%). Thirty per cent of older graduates had completed courses in the business, administration and economics fields, 11 per cent in TAFE multi-field education and only 4 per cent in the science field. Fifteen per cent of older males also completed engineering/surveying courses while 22 per cent of older females completed courses in the health and community services field.

What is strikingly different, however, is their educational profile. Although 37 per cent of older graduates had completed Year 12, more than two-thirds of them had post-school qualifications. This completion rate is 50 per cent higher than that of the older student population currently in training, as discussed in the previous section. In addition, more older male graduates had completed Year 12 (41%, 35%) and post-school qualifications than females (75%, 62%). It is clear that post-school qualifications are a key determining factor in training. Older people with post-school qualifications are not only more likely to be undertaking training but they are also more likely to complete their studies. Given that older males come from a more educated background, this is particularly the case for older males.

Older graduates offer a valuable insight into the satisfaction and employment outcomes of vocational training. This is the focus of the next section.

Employment

Industries employing older TAFE graduates

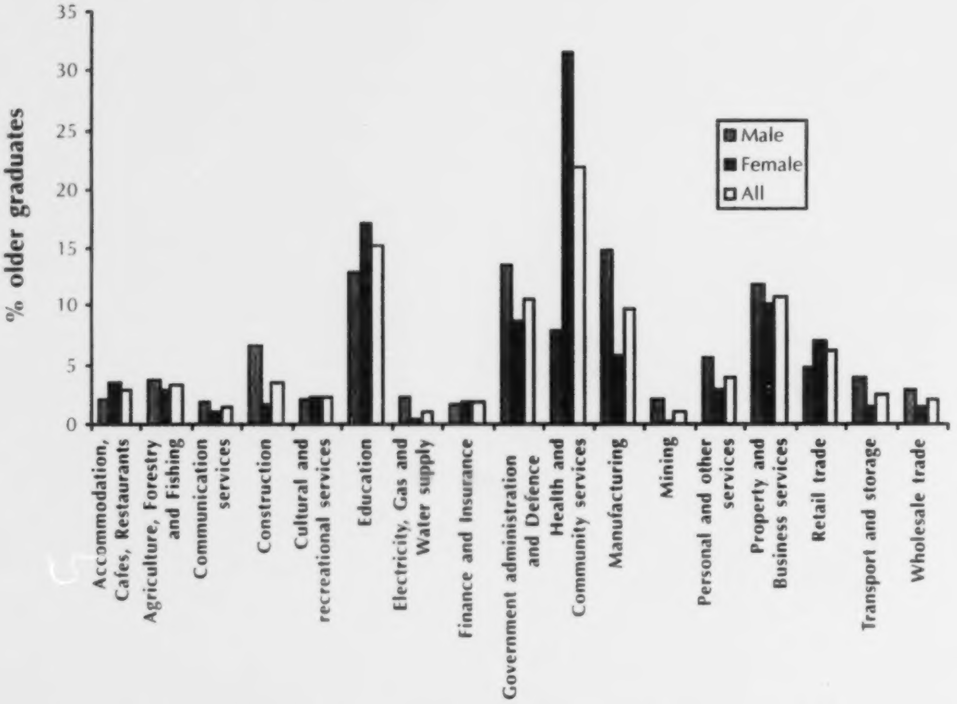
Figure 2.9 shows the industries employing older people who graduated from TAFE in 1997. This shows that older females were mainly working in three industries. Almost a third of older female graduates were employed in the health and community services sector, 17 per cent in the educational sector and 10 per cent in the property and services sector. These three industries represent almost 60 per cent of all older female graduates. Older male graduates were employed in a wider range of industries where they were more evenly distributed across these industries. They were primarily working in the manufacturing, government administration, educational and property and business service sectors (15%, 14%, 13%, 12%).

Overall, 60 per cent of older graduates who were employed before commencing their TAFE training remained with the same employer during and at the completion of their studies. This was more indicative of older males than females (67%, 55%).

Employer characteristics

More than 60 per cent of older graduates were working in the private sector. In the public sector more than a quarter of these graduates were employed by the state government. In terms of the local workplace, older male graduates were mainly employed in large enterprises with more than 100 employees (42%). In contrast, older females were working in very small enterprises with less than 10

Figure 2.9: Industries employing older TAFE graduates by gender, 1998



employees or very large enterprises with more than 100 employees (33%, 30%). However the majority of older graduates were employed in organisations with more than 100 workers Australia-wide (58%).

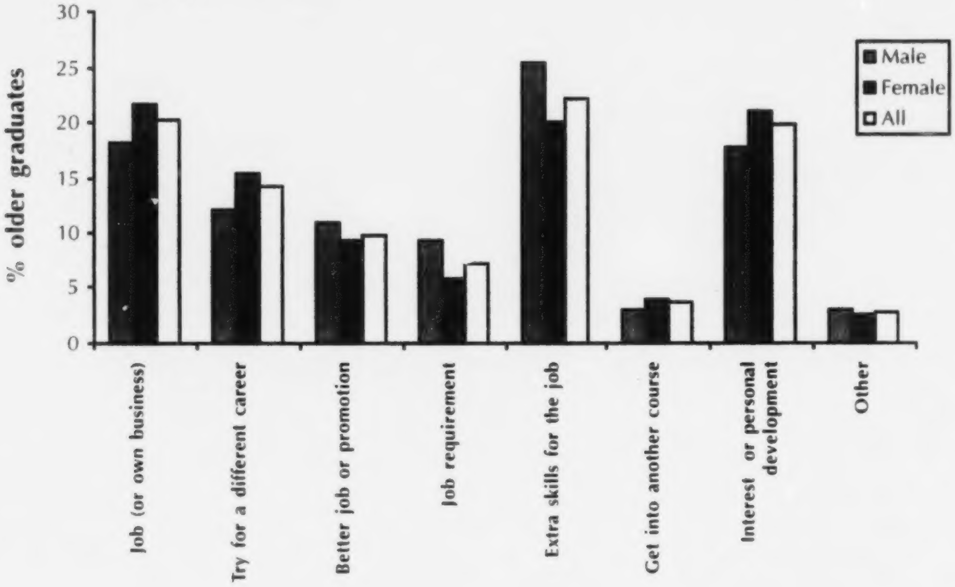
Satisfaction outcomes

Reasons for undertaking the course

Older people undertake training at TAFE for vocational and non vocational reasons. Vocational reasons include securing a job, changing careers, a promotion, as part of their job requirements or to gain extra skills. Non-vocational reasons comprise interest or personal development and undertaking TAFE study as a prerequisite for entry into another course. Figure 2.10 shows the proportion of older TAFE graduates who undertook vocational programs for these reasons. Although three-quarters of older people undertake training for vocational reasons, older females are more likely to undertake training for non-vocational reasons compared with older males.

The primary motivation for older people to undertake vocational training is to gain extra skills for their job. Twenty-two per cent of older graduates cite this reason as their main training objective. As illustrated in figure 2.10, this is the main focus of older males as reported by more than a quarter of them. Of secondary but equal importance is gaining employment or owning a business and interest or personal development. In total 40 per cent of older people indicated these reasons for training, however older females have a stronger commitment to these two training objectives than older males.

Figure 2.10: Reasons for older TAFE graduates to undertake vocational training by gender, 1998



Only 14 per cent of older people undertook training for the purpose of changing careers. Older females are more likely to seek training to achieve this objective than males. Furthermore, older people show less interest in studying at TAFE in order to gain a promotion or as part of their job requirements as indicated by the low numbers in figure 2.10, although older males give a higher priority to these areas than older females. In addition, only 4 per cent of older people study as a means to get into another course.

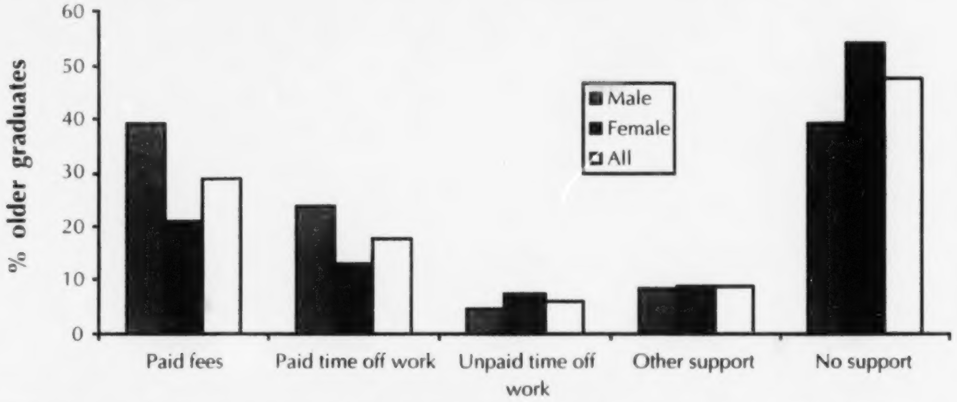
Older students, however, are less driven to pursue vocational training for vocational reasons with age. They are less likely to be in training for the purposes of securing employment, gaining extra skills or as a job requirement. Instead there is an increasing trend to invest in training for interest or personal development reasons. Figure 2.10 shows that a fifth of older people undertook training for this reason. Furthermore, 15 per cent of 45 to 49 year olds indicated personal development as their main reason for study and this peaked at 58 per cent of the 65 to 69 year olds. The likelihood of undertaking training as a prerequisite to get into another TAFE course also increases with age.

Employer support for training

The majority of older workers who undertook training for vocational reasons received support from their employers during their studies. However, 48 per cent of older graduates received no form of employer support. As shown in figure 2.11, employer support was mainly in the form of financial assistance.

Twenty-nine per cent of older graduates received financial support through paid fees while 17 per cent were given paid time off work. It is also clear from figure 2.11 that employers provide significantly more financial assistance to older males than females. Older females are more likely to get unpaid time off work. Furthermore, older females are less likely to receive any form of assistance from their employers during their studies. This may be partially due to the generally part-time nature of employment for older females.

Figure 2.11: Reasons for older TAFE graduates to undertake vocational training by gender, 1998



The level of employer support for training is also related to the student's training objectives. Older graduates were less likely to receive employer assistance if the focus of their study was to change careers, get a job or own their own business (69%, 71%). In addition, 64 per cent of older students pursuing personal development did not receive employer support although 15 per cent of older workers had their fees paid and 10 per cent were given paid time off work. Given that more older females seek vocational training as a means to change careers, get a job or establish a business or for personal development reasons than older males, this may also partially explain why they receive less employer support.

Older workers undertaking training as part of their job requirements, for the purposes of gaining extra skills for their job or to obtain a promotion were more likely to attract employer support. Fifty-two per cent of older graduates studying as part of their job requirements received employer assistance in the form of paid fees and 26 per cent were given paid time off work to pursue their studies. Of older graduates in training to gain extra skills for their job, 35 per cent were given financial support for their training costs and 21 per cent received paid time off work. However 42 per cent received no support during their studies. Although the least employer support was given to older graduates who were studying to get a better job or promotion, 28 per cent of graduates had their fees paid by their employers and 20 per cent were given paid time off work, while 47 per cent still received no support. These findings suggest that older males are more likely to receive employer support for training, particularly financial assistance, due to the fact that more males tend to undertake TAFE studies for these three reasons than older females.

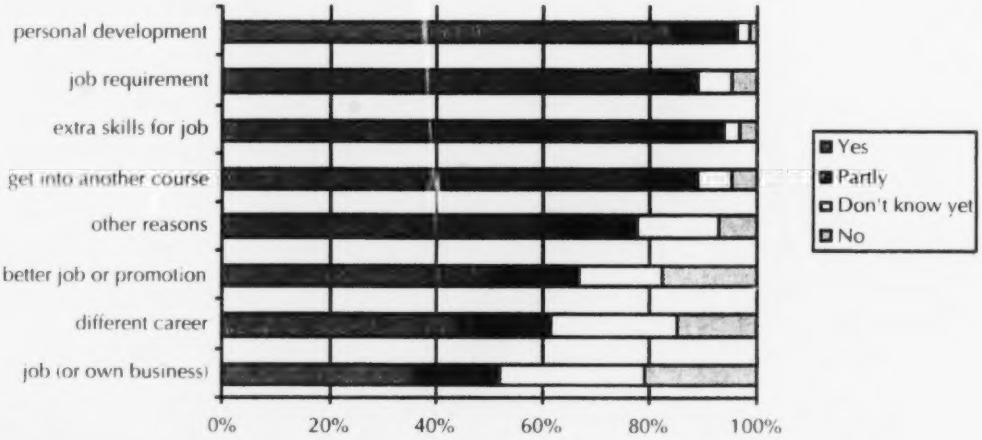
Level of success

The level of success of achieving the vocational and non-vocational training objectives of older graduates is illustrated in figure 2.12. This shows the proportion of older graduates who fully or partly achieved their aims six months after the completion of their TAFE course and those who did not or were still unsure of the effectiveness of their training.

Figure 2.12 clearly shows that older graduates who undertook vocational programs for non-vocational reasons achieved their objectives. Despite the fact that graduates received little employer support, 96 per cent of older graduates undertaking vocational programs for interest or personal development reasons fully or partly met their training needs. Almost a quarter of these graduates undertook business courses while a fifth studied arts/humanities and 19 per cent had pursued multi-field education courses. Those undertaking a TAFE course as a prerequisite for entry into a further course were also successful in meeting their aims (89%). Although small in number, more than half of these older graduates studied courses in the TAFE multi-field.

The majority of older graduates studying to gain extra skills for their job or as a job requirement were also highly successful. Ninety-four per cent of older graduates in vocational training to gain extra skills either fully or partly achieved this objective. More than a third of these graduates had completed business courses. Eighty-nine per cent of older graduates studying as part of their job requirement were also satisfied. Almost 60 per cent of these graduates had studied courses in the education or health fields. Financial support from employers may have also contributed to these training needs being met.

Figure 2.12: Older graduates' level of success in achieving their training objectives, 1998



Older graduates undertaking training to get a better job or promotion or for the purposes of changing careers were less successful. Two thirds of older graduates fully or partly achieved getting a better job or a promotion. They had mainly completed business courses. Sixty-one per cent of older graduates who were studying with the objective of changing careers were satisfied with their training outcome. More than half of these graduates had pursued business or health courses. The higher success rate of older graduates seeking training for promotional purposes, may also be explained by the employer support they received during their studies.

Older graduates who undertook training as a means of finding employment or establishing their own business had the lowest success rates. Only 52 per cent of these graduates indicated some success at achieving their goal. More than a third of these graduates had completed business courses. However the employment outcomes are differentiated by the employment status of the older student before training. Of those who were employed before the course more than two-thirds changed employers. This suggests that, as a result of their training , older graduates experienced some change in their employment situation. However only one-quarter of older people who were not in the labour force before commencing their studies had found employment. Furthermore only 29 per cent of older graduates who had been unemployed before the course found work. More than a quarter of these people already had a job before the completion of their course. Of those who had not secured a job during their studies, it took more than half of them three months or more to find a job. However 56 per cent of these older graduates were still unemployed and looking for work and 15 per cent were not in the labour force six months after the completion of their studies.

Overall, this low employment rate suggests that TAFE qualifications had little effect on securing employment for these older graduates. However, factors other than age may have influenced this outcome. These include the length of unemployment prior to training or graduating with qualifications related to an oversupplied market or a declining industry.

Opinions of the course

TAFE graduates were also surveyed for their opinion on thirteen aspects of their TAFE course. These areas were rated on a 10 point scale with *1* representing poor and *10* representing excellent. Table 2.5 summarises the results of this question by grouping all the responses rating 7 or higher on each of the 13 areas.

Older graduates gave higher ratings to 11 aspects of the course compared with all graduates. This is particularly evident in five areas. They were more satisfied with the class times and venues, the information received when selecting courses and modules, the quality and quantity of equipment and the presentation of course material. This may suggest that the vocational programs offered at TAFE are better suited to older people.

Table 2.5: TAFE graduates' satisfaction ratings for aspects of their course, 1998

	45+ graduates % rating 7 or higher	All graduates % rating 7 or higher
Instructor's knowledge of course content	90.0	87.9
Overall quality of the course	87.5	85.3
Convenience of venue and class times	84.8	78.5
Making methods of assessment clear	82.5	80.0
Presentation of course material	80.9	75.5
Course content reflects industry practice	79.4	76.1
Usefulness of the course for job prospects	74.3	75.3
Balance between instruction and practice	74.3	73.1
Quality of the equipment provided to practice skills	73.1	69.1
Information received when choosing courses, subjects/modules	73.0	67.4
Having enough equipment to practice skills	72.5	67.3
Qualification well regarded by employers	70.3	70.2
Information about careers and jobs available	53.1	50.6

Overall, older graduates gave the highest ratings to the instructor's knowledge and the quality of the course. This was common to all graduates. However, it is quite clear from the low rating that information about careers and jobs was not adequately provided. This is not specific to older people as all graduates rated this area poorly. In addition, there was some sensitivity about how well the qualification was regarded by employers as suggested by the second to lowest rating. Although 74 per cent of older graduates were satisfied with the usefulness of the course for job prospects it was rated lower than that of all graduates suggesting this is slightly more of a concern for older people.

Overall, the ratings in table 2.5 suggest older people are generally satisfied with their vocational programs. Furthermore TAFE appears to offer an older person a friendly training environment. However, career guidance and job resources are seriously lacking. This is required not only for older people in training but all graduates.

Conclusions

It is evident that people in VET are getting older. The diversity of older students increases with age along with changes to their employment and training needs. Vocational and personal enrichment programs complement each other in providing a training environment to cater for these changing circumstances. In particular vocational programs are very successful in providing personal development or the skills required to maintain a job. However, although older people are generally satisfied with vocational training, the employment outcomes and career advancement opportunities are not so positive. Employer support during their studies and the provision of career guidance and job resources targeted at older students could greatly improve their training outcomes.

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Training and labour market issues

Katrina Ball

The objective of this chapter is to analyse the labour market situation and training opportunities facing older Australians in order to assess if older Australians have equitable opportunities and access to training compared with younger members of the labour market and to identify particular training issues facing older Australians.

> *With the development of closer links between training and employment, factors such as labour market status and terms of employment are likely to impact upon access to training opportunities. Similarly, with shifts towards a more market-oriented environment the capacity of clients to access flexible delivery services and support, to pay for services not covered by government funding and access information and make informed choice will need to be taken into account. The implications of such factors for equity in vocational education and training will need to be considered.* (ANTA 1999, p. 5)

This chapter also provides an overview of the labour market situation of older Australians, followed by a discussion of training undertaken by older Australians. As training undertaken varies according to industry of employment and level of occupation, the situation of older workers is considered within the context of their location in employment. Training issues that are likely to impinge on older workers in the future because of the nature of their employment are then discussed.

In line with most Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries (OECD), in Australia workers count for an increasing proportion of the workforce because of demographic changes. The Australian population profile of people aged 15 years and older in 1990 and 1998 is shown in table 3.1. In 1990, 39 per cent of people aged 15 and over were older than 45 years of age. By 1998 the percentage in this group aged over 45 had increased to 43 per cent. Population projections, derived from the demographic module of the Econtech MM2 model, indicate that by 2010 this will have risen to 49 per cent. By 2020 more than half of the population (53 %) over 15 years of age will be aged 45 years and over. Given the increasing role of older workers in the workforce, it is important to understand issues facing older workers in the labour market and assess if this group is achieving equitable access to training opportunities.

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Table 3.1: Population profile of people 15 years and older, by gender

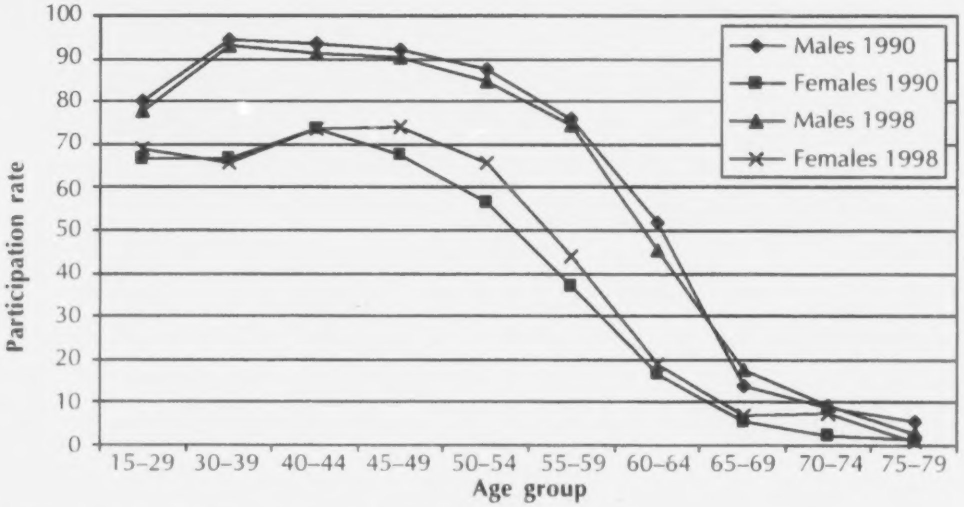
	1990			1998		
Age	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
15-19	10.8	10.2	10.5	9.2	8.5	8.9
20-24	10.5	10.0	10.2	9.5	8.9	9.2
25-29	10.9	10.5	10.7	10.1	9.8	9.9
30-34	10.6	10.4	10.5	9.6	9.4	9.5
35-39	10.0	9.8	9.9	10.2	10.0	10.1
40-44	9.7	9.2	9.5	9.5	9.4	9.5
45-49	7.6	7.1	7.4	9.0	8.7	8.8
50-54	6.4	6.0	6.2	8.1	7.6	7.8
55-59	5.6	5.3	5.5	6.1	5.7	5.9
60-64	5.6	5.5	5.6	5.0	4.9	5.0
65-69	4.8	5.2	5.0	4.6	4.6	4.6
70+	7.5	10.8	9.2	9.1	12.5	10.8
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Number ('000s)	6,576.5	6,711.8	13,288.3	7,318.7	7,509.9	14,828.6

Source: Derived from ABS Population by age and sex, cat no. 3201.0

Overview of the labour market for older workers

As illustrated in figure 3.1, the pattern of labour force participation differs by age and gender with labour force participation for some members of the labour force continuing past 70 years of age. Almost one in ten men in the 70 to 74 year old age group were in the labour force in November 1998. After 40 years of age male labour force participation declines gradually with age with only three-quarters of the 55 to 59 year old age group still in the labour force in November 1998. About 45 per cent of the 60 to 64 year age group were still participating in the labour force.

Figure 3.1: Labour force participation rates, November 1990 and November 1998



Source: Unpublished data from the ABS labour force survey

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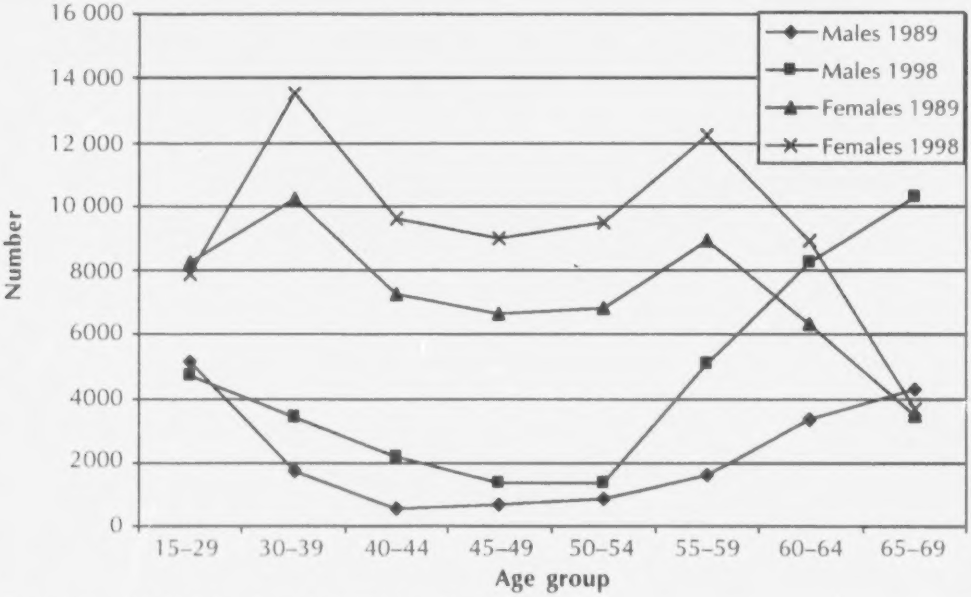
With the exception of men aged 65 to 69, there has been a marked decline in labour force participation for men in all age groups since 1990; particularly in older age groups. In 1990 over half of all males aged 60 to 64 were in the labour force compared with 45 per cent in 1998. Despite the decline in labour force participation rates for men in older age groups, men aged over 45 comprised 31 per cent of the male labour force in 1998, compared with 27 per cent at the start the decade, due to the effect of demographic changes on the Australian population.

The situation for women is quite different. In sharp contrast to men, labour market participation for women in all age groups over 45 years of age increased over the 1990s. Women's labour force participation in November 1998 reached a peak of 74 per cent at 40 to 49 years of age before declining to 44 per cent at 55 to 59 years of age. However, less than 20 per cent of women in the 60 to 64 year age group were still in the labour force.

Since 1990, there has been an increase in the proportion of the labour force aged over 45 years of age, with a notable increase in the proportion of women in the labour force over 45 years of age. In 1998, 28 per cent of women in the age group 15 to 64 were aged over 45 years compared with 22 per cent at the beginning of the decade.

Over the decade, there was an increase in the number of both males and females who were classified by the ABS as discouraged workers. A discouraged worker is someone who wants a job but is not actively looking for a job. The number of discouraged workers in November 1990 and 1998 by age and gender is illustrated in figure 3.2. Between 30 and 60 years of age, women account for the majority of discouraged workers. At age 60 there are roughly equal numbers

Figure 3.2: Discouraged job seekers by age and gender



Source: Unpublished data from the ABS labour force survey of men and women who are discouraged workers, however, after 60 years of age men form the majority of discouraged workers.

Although labour force participation rates for men have declined since 1990, there has been an increase of over 100 per cent in the number of discouraged workers. Over the same period, there has been a 28 per cent increase in the number of female discouraged workers. For both men and women the number of discouraged workers has increased for all age groups except the 15 to 29 year age group. For men, the highest rate of increase (218%) in the number of discouraged workers was in the 40 to 44 year age group. For women, the highest rate of increase (42%) in the number of discouraged workers was in the 60 to 64 year age group.

Details of unemployment rates for labour force participants by age are provided in table 3.2 and data on the average duration of unemployment by age is illustrated in figure 3 3. While the proportion of the labour force unemployed does not increase with age, the average duration of unemployment increases markedly with age. With the exception of women in the age group 40 to 44 years, the average duration of unemployment for both men and women in all age groups to age 60 increased over the 1990s. For unemployed men 40 years and over, the average duration of unemployment in November 1998 was 76 weeks. With the exception of men aged 45 to 49 years, with an average duration of unemployment of 82 weeks, the average duration of unemployment was over 100 weeks for each five-year age grouping over 40 years of age. Average duration of unemployment for unemployed women is considerably shorter than for men in all age groupings, with the exception of women aged 55 to 59 years of age who had an average duration of unemployment of 122 weeks.

Until 65 years of age, over two-thirds of the labour force are either working full-time or are looking for full-time work. Details on the full-time status of the labour force by age and gender are shown in table 3.3. Although, there is a noticeable decline in the proportion of men working full-time after 55 years of age, most unemployed men continue to look for full-time work until they are over 65 years of age. About 90 per cent of unemployed men in the 60 to 64 year age group are looking for full-time work although only 79 per cent of this age group who are in employment are working full time. Over half of all men who continue to work past 65 years of age are working full-time until 75 years of age.

Between 50 and 60 per cent of employed women in all age groups under 60 years of age are working full-time. After 60 years of age the percentage working full-time declines to 43 per cent. However, with the exception of women over 60 years of age, over two-thirds of all unemployed women over 40 years of age are looking for full-time employment.

For those people who are working part-time the proportion of the workforce underemployed declines with age. Details on the preference of part-time workers to work more hours are provided in table 3.4. For men working part-time in November 1998, 54 per cent aged 30 to 39 years of age considered

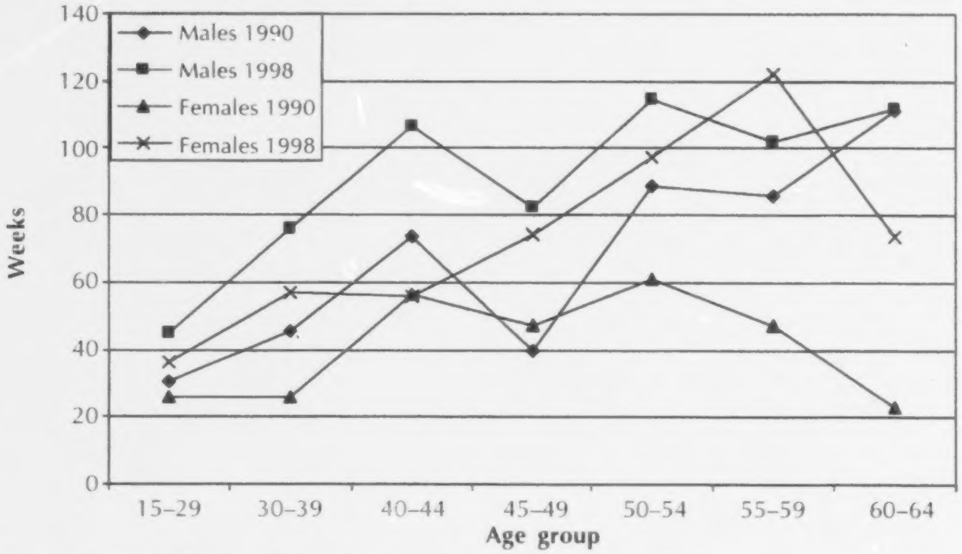
Table 3.2: Unemployment rates by age and gender, November

	1990		1998	
Age	Males	Females	Males	Females
15-29	12.1	10.7	11.9	10.5
30-39	6.3	5.6	6.1	7.1
40-44	4.2	4.4	4.9	5.5
45-49	4.4	4.9	6.4	5.0
40-49	4.3	4.6	5.6	5.2
50-54	4.5	3.4	5.0	4.2
55-59	5.5	4.2	8.6	4.5
50-59	4.9	3.7	6.4	4.3
60-64	8.3	0.8	5.8	3.2
65-69	2.6	1.6	1.5	0.9
60-69	7.2	1.0	4.7	2.6
70-74	5.0	3.3	0.0	1.0

Source: Unpublished data from the ABS labour force survey

themselves to be underemployed and would have preferred to work more hours. The proportion underemployed declined to 45 per cent for the 45 to 49 year age group and, by 60 to 65 years of age, less than 20 per cent of men considered themselves to be underemployed. A smaller proportion of women than men in all age groups considered they were underemployed. Less than a quarter of women working part-time in the age group 30 to 39 years, or in older age groups, wanted to work more hours. This proportion declined to less than 20 per cent in the 55 to 59 year age group, and further declined to 13 per cent for the 60 to 64 year age group.

Figure 3.3: Average duration of unemployment



Source: Unpublished data from the ABS labour force survey

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Table 3.3: Labour force status by full-time employment and age group, November 1998

Age group	Employed full-time %			Unemployed looking for full-time work %			Labour force full-time		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
15-29	77.3	57.7	68.1	79.4	62.1	71.9	77.6	58.1	68.5
30-39	94.5	55.2	78.1	96.6	61.2	80.6	94.6	55.7	78.3
40-44	93.7	55.3	76.5	94.2	66.1	80.9	93.7	55.9	76.8
45-49	94.2	59.5	78.5	94.0	71.8	85.3	94.2	60.1	78.9
50-54	92.5	57.6	77.4	94.4	73.4	86.3	92.6	58.3	77.9
55-59	89.0	51.6	75.1	91.2	85.7	90.0	89.2	53.2	76.1
60-64	78.9	43.2	68.1	90.0	33.2	79.3	79.6	42.9	68.7
65-69	56.1	26.2	47.3	65.7	0.0	52.7	56.2	26.0	47.4
70-74	53.4	28.7	47.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	53.4	27.8	47.2
75-79	46.0	47.5	46.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	46.0	47.5	46.5
80+	31.5	24.5	29.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	31.5	24.5	29.8
Total	**87.5**	**56.2**	**73.9**	**87.3**	**64.0**	**77.6**	**87.5**	**56.7**	**74.2**

Source: Unpublished data from the ABS labour force survey

Since 1990, there has been an increase in the proportion of both men and women in all age groups who are working part-time who would prefer to work more hours. For men the increase is more dramatic than for women. In 1998, 44 per cent of men in the 50 to 54 year age group, working part-time would have preferred to be working longer hours compared with only 28 per cent in 1990.

The average hours worked per week by men and women varies according to occupation. The average hours worked per week by employed persons by age, gender and occupation are shown in table 3.5. Across all occupations and ages men work, on average, 41 hours per week while women work, on average, 29 hours per week. For both men and women the average hours worked per week peaks between 40 and 54 years of age at 44 hours a week for men and 31 hours a week for women. As a large proportion of women work part-time, the focus of this discussion will be the differences across occupations and age groups in the average hours worked by men.

The main differences in average hours worked by males relate to the occupational level of employment rather than to age. Men employed in lower skilled occupations work fewer hours per week on average than men employed in higher level occupations. For some occupations, such as 'tradespersons and related workers', 'intermediate production and transport workers' and 'intermediate clerical and sales workers', the average hours worked by men is lower for the 55 to 59 year age group compared to younger ages. For other occupations, on average, hours worked reduces after 60 years of age. 'Managers and administrators', professionals, 'advanced clerical and sales workers', 'elementary clerical, sales and service workers' and 'labourers and related workers' on average work fewer hours after 60 years of age. Hence occupation is a more important factor than age in determining hours of work.

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Table 3.4: Part-time workers' preference to work more hours, Nov 1998, per cent

	15-29	30-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69
Males								
Underemployed and preferred more work hours	38.8	53.9	50.0	44.9	43.5	31.9	18.1	9.8
Did not want extra hours	59.6	43.2	48.1	54.6	51.0	67.0	81.1	90.2
Did not know if wanted extra hours	1.6	2.8	1.9	0.5	5.5	1.1	0.8	0.0
Part-time total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Females								
Underemployed and preferred more work hours	30.5	19.6	20.6	20.2	16.2	14.0	9.1	4.5
Did not want extra hours	68.0	79.4	78.7	79.3	82.8	84.5	90.9	95.5
Did not know if wanted extra hours	1.5	1.0	0.8	0.5	1.1	1.6	0.0	0.0
Part-time total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
All persons								
Underemployed and preferred more work hours	33.6	24.7	24.9	23.8	21.3	18.9	13.2	7.6
Did not want extra hours	64.8	74.0	74.1	75.6	76.8	79.6	86.4	92.4
Did not know if wanted extra hours	1.5	1.2	1.0	0.5	1.9	1.4	0.4	0.0
Part-time total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Unpublished ABS data from the labour force survey

Table 3.5: Average hours per week worked for employed persons by age, sex and occupation, Nov 1998

	Age Group										
	Males										Females
Occupation category	**15-29**	**30-39**	**40-44**	**45-49**	**50-54**	**55-59**	**60-64**	**65-69**	**70-74**	**All Ages**	**All Ages**
Managers and administrators	49.4	53.2	53.3	53	52.2	52.1	49	41.9	38.8	51.4	**38.3**
Professionals	38.9	43.3	43.8	43.6	44.5	40.3	37	25	24.9	41.9	33.6
Associate professionals	42.3	47.0	49.5	50.3	47.3	45.6	46.7	30.5	40.4	46.5	**37.6**
Tradespersons and related workers	39.4	41.4	41.6	41.4	41.4	38.5	38.8	34.2	25.9	40.4	30.7
Advanced clerical/sales workers	39.2	37.0	43.7	44.8	38.9	44.5	16.4	27.4	49.5	39.1	**27.1**
Intermediate clerical/sales workers	33.1	37.5	39.3	38.5	38.3	36.2	36.7	24.6	13.9	36.1	**28.1**
Intermediate production/ transport workers	35.5	42.5	42.4	41.1	43.9	38.1	38.3	34.9	19	39.9	**30.9**
Elementary clerical/sales/ service workers	24.7	39.4	39.0	39.6	34.3	39.2	30.0	22.0	18.6	30.2	21.9
Labourers and related workers	30.9	36.8	35.9	35.4	35.8	35.1	26.8	17.7	13.9	33.1	**23.9**
All occupations – males	**35.5**	**42.8**	**44.0**	**43.9**	**43.8**	**41.5**	**38.9**	**31.5**	**29.7**	**40.6**	
All occupations – females	**27.7**	**29.2**	**30.6**	**31.3**	**30.7**	**29.0**	**26.9**	**19.8**	**14.6**	**–**	**29.1**

Source: Unpublished ABS data from the labour force survey

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Training issues for older workers

Apart from age *per se*, there are a number of factors that influence participation in training by older workers. Such factors include attachment to the labour market and labour market status, gender, place of birth and the attainment, or otherwise, of post-school qualifications. It is the interaction of these factors with age that will influence the ability of an individual to access training. Some factors will act to nullify the effect of age on an individual's ability to access training, while in other instances these same factors will compound that effect.

In general, older workers are less likely to access training compared with younger workers. Details about participation in training by Australians in, or marginally attached to, the labour force in 1997 derived from the ABS Education and Experience Survey are provided in table 3.6.

In 1997, 72 per cent of Australians in the labour market participated in some form of training. Training reported in the survey may have taken the form of formal study, an in-house training course, an external training course or on-the-job training. Around three-quarters of the labour force under 45 years of age participated in training in 1997. At this time workers aged 30 to 39 years, on average, were more likely to access training compared with workers aged 15 to 29 years or workers aged 40 to 44 years. After 45 years of age, participation in training declined for each age group with about 72 per cent of workers in the 45 to 49 year age group and less than 45 per cent of workers aged 60 to 64 years participating in training.

Table 3.6: Participation in training by persons in, or marginally attached to, the labour force, 1997

	Employed				Not employed			
		Own business						
Age group	Wage or salary earner	With employees	Without employees	Total(c)	Unemployed	Marginally attached	Total	Total
15 – 29 years	83.3	74.1	75.5	82.4	60.1	32.6	47.1	74.9
30 – 39 years	85.0	77.2	70.3	82.5	48.6	30.1	38.5	76.5
40 – 44 years	83.1	72.6	63.9	79.1	52.9	28.2	40.0	74.5
45 – 49 years	79.7	72.7	61.7	76.2	45.5	19.2	31.5	71.9
50 – 54 years	74.6	60.8	57.4	69.8	39.5	23.6	32.5	66.0
55 – 59 years	66.2	60.9	46.4	61.0	35.6	20.2	27.9	57.0
60 – 64 years	53.6	51.3	34.5	48.6	28.6	18.9	21.5	43.6
Total	**81.3**	**70.5**	**62.9**	**78.1**	**53.2**	**29.0**	**41.0**	**72.4**
Number ('000s)	6 681.3	540.7	984.6	8 283.4	746.3	764.3	1 510.6	9 794.0

Source: Unpublished data from the ABS Education and Training Experience survey

Gender

As a group, older women attached to the labour market have lower training participation rates than men. Training participation rates by gender are shown in table 3. 7. After 45 years of age, training participation rates for women are lower for all age groups compared with men. About 69 per cent of women in

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Table 3.7: **Participation in training by persons in, or marginally attached to, the labour force, by gender, 1997**

	Employed				Not employed			
		Own business						
Age group	Wage or salary earner	With employees	Without employees	Total(c)	Unemployed	Marginally attached	Total	Total
Males								
15 – 29 years	84.1	82.5	75.3	82.9	58.9	30.4	47.7	75.8
30 – 39 years	85.6	78.2	69.8	82.7	49.1	44.2	47.9	79.8
40 – 44 years	80.9	73.1	64.2	77.0	47.9	26.1	41.1	74.0
45 – 49 years	79.6	78.3	60.9	76.1	49.0	39.4	45.8	74.1
50 – 54 years	74.1	61.1	58.7	69.2	36.1	38.4	36.8	66.5
55 – 59 years	66.3	63.0	46.9	61.0	33.5	36.5	34.4	58.1
60 – 64 years	58.2	57.7	37.3	52.7	31.0	22.8	25.8	47.5
Total	**81.3**	**72.8**	**62.9**	**77.7**	**51.7**	**32.0**	**44.7**	**73.6**
Females								
15 – 29 years	82.5	55.4	75.9	81.8	61.8	34.2	46.6	73.9
30 – 39 years	84.3	75.6	71.1	82.3	48.2	27.9	34.0	72.6
40 – 44 years	85.4	71.6	63.3	81.6	58.4	28.8	39.5	74.9
45 – 49 years	79.7	59.5	63.8	76.4	41.6	13.3	23.6	69.4
50 – 54 years	75.2	59.6	54.6	70.7	44.0	17.2	28.9	65.4
55 – 59 years	66.0	52.9	45.1	61.0	46.9	12.4	18.8	55.0
60 – 64 years	44.5	33.3	24.8	39.7	0.0	10.9	10.0	34.6
Total	**81.2**	**65.5**	**63.0**	**78.7**	**55.4**	**27.7**	**38.1**	**71.0**

Source: Unpublished data from the ABS Education and Training Experience survey

the 45 to 49 year age group participated in training compared with 74 per cent of men. For the age 60 to 64 year age group 35 per cent of women participated in training compared with 48 per cent of men.

Women's participation in training is an organisational issue as not all groups of women in the labour market have lower participation rates than men. With the exception of women in the 60 to 64 year age groups, participation rates for female wage and salary earners are comparable to the training participation rates of men. Self-employed women however, tend to participate less in training compared with their male counterparts.

The group with the largest discrepancies in training participation rates between men and women is the group marginally attached to the labour market. While women who are unemployed and over 50 years of age participate in training to at least the same extent as men, this is not the situation for women who are marginally attached to the labour market.

Labour market status

Of all people in the labour market, the least likely to access training are those who are marginally attached to the labour market. A person who is 'marginally attached' to the labour market is defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as a person not in the labour force who wanted to work and was either actively looking for work, but did not meet the criteria to be classified as unemployed, or was not actively looking for work but was available to start work within four weeks if childcare was available.

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On average, 29 per cent of this group participated in training in the year prior to being surveyed in 1997. While about a third of the 15 to 29 year age group and 30 per cent of the 30 to 39 year age group who were marginally attached to the labour market participated in training, by age 45, less than a quarter of each age group participated in training.

About half of those who were unemployed participated in training in the year prior to the survey. While 60 per cent of 15 to 19 year olds who were unemployed had participated in some form of training, the percentage that participated in training declined to 45 per cent for the 45 to 49 year age group. Participation in training by people who were unemployed continued to decline for each age group until only 29 per cent of those aged 60 to 64 years participated in any form of training.

In contrast, over four in every five wage or salary earners participated in training in the year prior to the survey. Akin to those who were unemployed and to those marginally attached to the labour market, participation declined notably for those in the 45 to 49 year age group and for older age groups compared with younger age groups.

Employers across all age groups, on average, participate in less training than wage and salary earners. With the exception of employers aged 15 to 29 years, employers who have no employees participate in less training across all age groups compared with employers with employees. For employers with employees, participation in training declines notably for the 50 to 54 year age group with about 60 per cent of employers in this age group participating in training compared with 72 per cent of those aged 45 to 49 years of age. For employers without employees training participation declines steadily with age from 76 per cent for those in the 15 to 29 year age group down to 35 per cent for those in the 60 to 64 year age group.

Although training participation declines with age for all older age groups, location within the labour market is a more important determinant of whether an individual is likely to participate in training. It is therefore important to ascertain if there are differences in labour market location across age groups. The employment profile of persons in or marginally attached to the labour force, as determined by the ABS Education and Training Survey in 1997 is shown in table 3.8. People in the 15 to 29 year age group are more likely to be not employed (either unemployed or marginally attached) than in any other age group. The group which is not employed are more at risk of not participating in any form of training compared with others in their age group who are in employment. There is little difference in the percentage of the labour force in the 'not employed' category until 60 to 64 years of age. Almost 20 per cent of this age group are not employed and therefore are at risk of not participating in training.

The proportion of wage and salary earners in the labour force declines with age. About 72 per cent of those in the 15 to 29 year age group are in this labour market category compared with 66 per cent of those in the 40 to 44 year age group. The percentage of wage and salary earners declines to around 60 per cent of the 55 to 59 year age group and only half of those in the 60 to 64 year age group are in this employment category. As wage and salary earners are the highest participants in training of all labour force categories, part of the decline in training participation that occurs with age can be attributed to the changes in employment status that occurs with age.

Table 3.8: Employment profile of persons in, or marginally attached to, the labour force, 1997

	Employed				Not employed			
	Wage or salary earner	Own business						
Age group		With Employees	Without Employees	Total	Unemployed	Marginally Attached	Total	Total
15–29 years	72.3	1.2	4.1	78.7	11.3	10.1	21.3	100.0
30–39 years	69.0	6.0	10.7	86.3	6.1	7.6	13.7	100.0
40–44 years	65.9	8.9	13.0	88.1	5.7	6.2	11.9	100.0
45–49 years	67.6	9.5	12.8	90.4	4.5	5.1	9.6	100.0
50–54 years	63.9	9.0	16.1	89.9	5.7	4.4	10.1	100.0
55–59 years	59.9	7.4	19.3	87.7	6.1	6.2	12.3	100.0
60–64 years	50.9	10.5	18.3	81.5	5.1	13.4	18.5	100.0
Total	**68.2**	**5.5**	**10.1**	**84.6**	**7.6**	**7.8**	**15.4**	**100.0**
Number ('000s)	**6,681.3**	**540.7**	**984.6**	**8,283.4**	**746.3**	**764.3**	**1,510.6**	**9,794.0**

Source: Unpublished data from the ABS Education and Training Experience survey

As there are relatively fewer wage and salary earners and proportionately more in the 'not employed' category in the 60 to 64 year old age group, compared with other mature age groups, this group is at risk of not participating in training because of factors related to location in the labour market.

Wage and salary earners

As wage and salary earners are more likely to participate in training than other groups in the labour force it is important to understand the type of training undertaken by members of this group to determine if participation in different types of training alters with age. Details about the training undertaken by persons during 1997 who had a wage or salary job in the last 12 months are provided in table 3.9.

About one in four of all wage and salary earners under 30 years of age were studying in 1996 compared with one in eight of those in the 30 to 39 year age group. The proportion studying declined to one in ten for the 40 to 44 year age group. For wage and salary earners aged over 45 the proportion studying declined for each age group with 8 per cent of wage and salary earners in the 45 to 49 age group studying in 1996, declining to 2 per cent for those in the 60 to 64 year age group.

A third of all wage and salary earners participated in some form of in-house training with participation rates increasing with age until 40 years of age. About

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36 per cent of wage and salary earners aged 45 to 54 undertook some form of in-house training. Participation rates for the 55 to 59 year age group were comparable to those of the 15 to 29 year age group. Less than one in five wage and salary earners in the 60 to 64 year age group participated in in-house training.

Older and younger wage and salary earners are less likely to participate in employer supported training compared with those aged between 30 and 54 years of age. Less than one in ten wage and salary earners in the 15 to 29 year age group or the 55 to 59 year age group participated in employer supported training compared with over one in eight of those in the 30 to 54 year age group. Only 6 per cent of wage and salary earners in the 60 to 64 year age group participated in employer supported training.

A higher proportion of wage and salary earners participated in on-the-job training compared with other forms of training, with participation rates declining after 40 years of age. Three quarters of all wage and salary earners under 40 years of age participated in this form of training. Participation rates for wage and salary earners aged over 40 declined for each age group with 73 per cent of wage and salary earners in the 40 to 44 year age group participating in on-the-job training compared with 63 per cent of those aged 50 to 54. Less than half of all wage and salary earners in the 60 to 64 year age group participated in on-the-job training.

Table 3.9: Percentage of respondents who had a wage and salary job in the last 12 months who undertook training

	Study or training courses undertaken							
			External training					
Age group	Studied in 1996	In-house	Employer supported	Total	Total	On-the-job	Some training undertaken	Total
15 – 29 years	26.0	27.5	9.0	17.2	54.1	74.8	81.9	100
30 – 39 years	13.2	38.0	14.1	23.1	57.0	74.8	84.0	100
40 – 44 years	10.5	39.3	15.6	24.4	57.6	72.8	82.3	100
45 – 49 years	7.6	36.4	13.2	20.8	52.4	68.5	78.8	100
50 – 54 years	5.4	36.2	12.5	20.3	49.5	63.3	73.4	100
55 – 59 years	3.0	27.7	9.3	15.9	39.8	58.2	66.9	100
60 – 64 years	2.1	18.9	6.0	10.4	27.0	47.0	52.8	100
Total	**15.8**	**33.0**	**11.7**	**20.0**	**53.5**	**71.6**	**80.2**	**100**
Number ('000s)	**1 219.4**	**2 539.0**	**903.4**	**1 536.7**	**4 116.1**	**5 516.6**	**6 173.0**	**7 700.6**

Source: Unpublished data from the ABS Education and Training Experience survey

Results from the 1997 and 1993 education and training experience surveys (ABS 1993, 1997)indicate that a higher percentage of wage and salary earners in all age groups (except the 60 to 64 year age group) reported they had participated in some form of training in the 1993 survey compared with the 1997 survey. The higher training participation rates reported in 1993 can be attributed to a fall in participation in on-the-job training as there was an increase in participation in study or training courses undertaken across all age groups, including employer supported training, reported in 1997 compared with 1993.

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Participation rates in both study and training courses and on-the-job training were higher in 1997 compared with 1989 for people in all age groups over 45 years of age.

Country of birth

Participation in training by wage and salary earners is strongly influenced by country of birth. Wage and salary earners who reported in the ABS survey that they were from a non-English-speaking background were less likely to participate in all forms of training compared with wage and salary earners born in Australia or in another English-speaking country. Details of training undertaken by wage and salary earners born in Australia, born in other English-speaking countries and born in non-English-speaking countries are shown in table 3.10. About 71 per cent of non-English-speaking background wage and salary earners participated in training compared with over 80 per cent of wage and salary earners born in Australia and 85 per cent who were born in other English-speaking countries. With the exception of the 15 to 29 year age group and the 60 to 64 year age group, a smaller percentage of wage and salary earners who were born in a non-English-speaking country participated in all forms of training, across all age groups.

The largest differences in participation in training by non-English-speaking background wage and salary earners compared with those born in an English-speaking country was for the 50 to 54 year age group. About 62 per cent of non-English-speaking background workers in this age group participated in some form of training, compared with 75 per cent of those born in Australia and about 82 per cent of those born in another English-speaking country. Only half of this age group who were of non-English-speaking background participated in on-the-job training compared with 64 per cent of those born in Australia and about 72 per cent of those born in another English-speaking country.

Post-school qualifications

For labour market participants, the attainment of a post-school qualification is a major factor influencing participation in training. Across all age groups it is more likely that a person who holds a post-school qualification will participate in some form of training compared with a person who does not. Details on participation in study or training courses, or in some form of training according to whether or not a person holds a post-school qualification are provided in tables 3.11 and 3.12, respectively. About 58 per cent of labour force participants with post-school qualifications undertook study or a training course compared with 36 per cent of labour force participants who did not hold a post-school qualification. About 83 per cent of labour force participants with post-school qualifications undertook some form of training compared with 62 per cent of labour force participants who did not hold a post-school qualification.

There was a steady decline with age in the percentage of people with a post-school qualification who participated in training. However, over half of all people (53%) aged 50 to 54 years with a post-school qualification participated in study or undertook a training course. There was a notable decline in participation in study or training courses after 55 years of age with only 40 per cent of the 55 to 59 year old age group participating in this form of training.

The marked difference in training participation rates between those who hold a post-school qualification and those who do not, is highlighted by the difference in participation in study and training courses at young ages. For the 15 to 29 year age group two-thirds of labour market participants with a post-school qualification participated in study or training courses compared with only 40 per cent of those who did not hold a post-school qualification. The participation rate for teenagers and young adults who are labour market

Table 3.10: Percentage of respondents who had a wage and salary job in the last 12 months who undertook training, by country of birth

	Study or training courses undertaken							
		External Training						
Age group	Studied in 1996	In-house	Employer supported	Total	Total	On-the-job	Some training undertaken	Total
Born in Australia								
15–29 years	25.1	27.8	9.1	17.3	53.5	74.4	81.4	100.0
30–39 years	13.2	40.2	14.8	24.2	59.5	76.1	85.3	100.0
40–44 years	11.3	41.4	16.8	26.7	61.2	75.3	84.6	100.0
45–49 years	7.2	37.6	14.1	21.6	54.1	68.6	79.4	100.0
50–54 years	5.6	38.0	13.7	21.8	52.6	64.4	74.9	100.0
55–59 years	3.5	30.6	10.8	18.1	43.2	59.9	69.5	100.0
60–64 years	2.6	22.7	6.3	10.3	31.2	47.1	53.6	100.0
Total	**16.4**	**33.9**	**12.1**	**20.6**	**55.0**	**72.6**	**81.1**	**100.0**
Born outside Australia – Main English-speaking countries								
15–29 years	25.1	35.4	10.3	18.9	60.1	83.3	89.8	100.0
30–39 years	15.4	39.8	13.5	22.5	57.0	79.2	86.7	100.0
40–44 years	9.3	41.2	16.2	25.2	57.5	77.2	86.5	100.0
45–49 years	10.2	37.8	13.2	23.6	53.4	77.6	85.6	100.0
50–54 years	7.4	44.2	18.2	28.2	57.9	71.8	81.6	100.0
55–59 years	3.0	32.1	7.1	12.9	43.8	63.8	72.1	100.0
60–64 years	2.3	10.5	7.0	8.6	16.8	46.5	52.0	100.0
Total	**13.7**	**37.9**	**13.1**	**21.9**	**55.2**	**76.6**	**84.5**	**100.0**
Born outside Australia–Other countries								
15–29 years	35.2	18.6	6.9	14.9	55.4	72.0	81.5	100.0
30–39 years	11.7	25.1	10.8	18.0	44.7	64.8	74.9	100.0
40–44 years	8.3	29.0	9.8	13.9	42.2	59.3	69.0	100.0
45–49 years	7.4	30.5	9.7	15.7	44.7	60.5	70.7	100.0
50–54 years	3.3	23.5	3.7	8.5	32.2	52.5	61.6	100.0
55–59 years	1.2	13.1	5.8	10.0	23.6	47.1	52.4	100.0
60–64 years	0.4	10.4	4.4	12.9	19.3	47.0	51.0	100.0
Total	**14.1**	**23.6**	**8.3**	**14.6**	**43.4**	**62.0**	**71.4**	**100.0**

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participants without a post-secondary qualification is comparable to the participation rate for the 50 to 54 year old age group who hold a post-school qualification. For labour market participants without post-school qualifications the participation rate in study or training courses declined to 29 per cent for the 50 to 54 year age group. Only 13 per cent of the 60 to 64 year age group participated in study or a training course.

The attainment of a post-school qualification equalises male and female training participation rates. Typically, men and women with post-school qualifications participate in training to the same extent; with 82 per cent of men participating in training compared with 83 per cent of women, although there are some differences across age groups. However, with the exception of the 40 to 44 year age group, women without post-school qualifications have lower training participation rates than men across all age groups. About 60 per cent of women without a post-school qualification participated in training compared with 64 per cent of men.

Across all age groups, over half of all labour market participants with a post-school qualification participated in some form of training compared with only a third of those without a post-school qualification. Two-thirds of all 15 to 29 year olds without a post-school qualification participated in some form of training; a participation rate that compares to the participation rate for the 55 to 59 year old age group who hold a post-school qualification. Only a third of 60 to 64 year olds without a post-school qualification participated in some form of training, compared with over half of those with a post-school qualification.

In general, participation in training declines with age for those in employment regardless of level of education. However, this is not necessarily the case for those not in employment. For people who are marginally attached to the labour market there is a marked difference in the relationship between participation in training and age depending on level of education. Training participation rates for people who are marginally attached to the labour market tend to decline with age for those who hold a post-school qualification. However, participation rates are consistently low for people of all ages who are marginally attached to the labour force and who do not hold a qualification.

Given the role of education as a factor influencing participation in training the profile of educational attainment across age groups would account for part of the difference in training participation rates across age groups when the percentage of the labour force who hold a post-school qualification declines with age. The percentage of the labour force holding a post-school qualification by age and labour market status is shown in table 3.13.

For the employed, there is a decline in the percentage of each age group who hold a post-school qualification after the 30 to 39 year age group. However, while differences are only marginal between the 30 to 39 year age group and the 40 to 44 year age group there is a notable decline in the percentage holding a post-school qualification after 44 years of age.

Table 3.11: Percentage of the labour force who participated in study or training courses by age and level of education

Age group	Employed				Not employed			Total
	Wage or salary earner	Own business		Total	Unemployed	Marginally attached	Total	
		With employees	Without employees					
Study or training courses undertaken with post-school qualifications								
15–29 years	68.4	40.8	44.6	66.0	64.9	42.3	57.8	65.0
35–39 years	66.3	49.4	39.3	61.7	48.1	33.3	39.9	59.6
40–44 years	68.0	46.8	32.7	60.7	50.2	26.2	37.8	58.7
45–49 years	63.1	43.0	35.4	56.7	36.6	12.8	24.7	54.4
50–54 years	62.8	34.7	33.2	54.6	52.3	9.4	35.5	53.1
55–59 years	50.2	20.7	21.8	41.5	42.0	20.0	32.8	40.7
60–64 years	36.8	40.0	21.3	34.5	27.1	14.8	19.0	31.4
Total	**65.2**	**42.7**	**35.4**	**59.7**	**53.2**	**28.6**	**42.0**	**57.9**
Study or training courses undertaken without post-school qualifications								
15–29 years	45.7	30.8	18.7	44.2	37.3	21.8	29.3	40.0
35–39 years	47.2	27.9	26.4	42.8	24.4	13.5	18.4	38.2
40–44 years	46.0	20.7	23.6	40.0	27.1	17.4	22.0	37.1
45–49 years	42.3	24.9	14.6	36.6	24.1	8.4	15.4	33.9
50–54 years	36.0	20.8	18.8	30.7	15.4	19.1	17.4	28.9
55–59 years	27.7	24.1	15.4	24.3	15.6	14.0	14.7	22.8
60–64 years	17.1	14.7	3.9	13.4	0.0	14.5	11.7	13.1
Total	**43.6**	**24.3**	**19.8**	**39.5**	**31.1**	**18.3**	**24.3**	**36.3**

Source: Unpublished data from the ABS Education and Training Experience survey

Table 3.12: Percentage of the labour force who participated in some form of training by age and level of education

Age group	Employed				Not employed			Total
	Wage or salary earner	Own business		Total	Unemployed	Marginally attached	Total	
		With employees	Without employees					
Some training undertaken with post-school qualifications								
15–29 years	92.6	77.6	80.6	91.4	81.1	63.8	75.6	89.7
35–39 years	88.8	83.6	77.3	87.0	56.7	41.2	48.2	83.2
40–44 years	89.9	78.4	68.6	85.6	72.2	39.3	55.3	82.9
45–49 years	87.4	78.3	69.0	83.6	55.8	31.4	43.6	80.7
50–54 years	85.1	66.4	68.5	80.1	62.0	17.4	44.5	77.3
55–59 years	75.5	64.3	57.6	70.4	48.7	26.7	39.1	67.6
60–64 years	68.5	66.9	40.1	62.4	37.6	16.0	23.5	54.5
Total	**88.6**	**76.7**	**70.8**	**85.4**	**67.2**	**40.7**	**55.1**	**82.5**
Some training undertaken without post-school qualifications								
15–29 years	76.2	71.2	67.6	75.3	52.6	27.7	39.9	65.4
35–39 years	79.1	66.4	61.5	75.7	43.2	22.3	31.7	67.3
40–44 years	73.2	63.5	58.3	69.8	37.6	20.0	28.4	63.2
45–49 years	69.7	65.3	50.9	66.5	36.9	11.0	22.7	61.0
50–54 years	60.4	51.6	45.4	56.3	20.4	27.2	23.8	52.1
55–59 years	54.8	56.3	34.3	49.7	24.6	17.2	20.4	45.1
60–64 years	39.8	31.9	30.1	36.1	9.5	20.9	18.7	33.2
Total	**73.0**	**61.5**	**53.2**	**69.7**	**45.7**	**24.3**	**34.4**	**62.2**

Source: Unpublished data from the ABS Education and Training Experience survey

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For those who are not employed there is a difference in educational attainment with age, depending on whether a person is unemployed or is marginally attached to the labour force. For those who are marginally attached to the labour force there is a decline in the percentage of people holding a post-school qualification from 40 years of age until 59 years of age. However, the percentage of the unemployed who hold a post-school qualification increases with age. Over two-thirds of the unemployed in the 60 to 64 year age group had attained a post-school qualification, compared with 41 per cent of unemployed people aged in their 30s.

Table 3.13: Percentage of the labour force who hold a post-school qualification, by age and labour market status, 1997

	Employed				Not employed			
		Own business						
Age group	Wage or salary earner	With employees	Without employees	Total	Unemployed	Marginally attached	Total	Total
15–29 years	43.5	48.4	60.7	44.2	26.4	13.7	20.4	39.1
30–39 years	60.7	63.3	55.3	60.2	40.9	41.4	41.2	57.6
40–44 years	59.4	61.5	54.8	59.0	44.0	42.6	43.4	57.1
45–49 years	56.5	56.9	60.2	57.0	45.1	40.2	42.5	55.6
50–54 years	57.6	61.7	51.9	56.8	45.4	37.0	41.8	55.2
55–59 years	55.1	55.2	52.0	54.6	47.3	32.7	40.1	52.8
60–64 years	48.0	55.6	43.3	47.6	67.5	48.5	53.6	48.7
Total	**53.0**	**59.4**	**55.4**	**53.6**	**35.0**	**28.7**	**31.8**	**50.2**

Source: Unpublished data from the ABS Education and Training Experience survey

Therefore, for people who are employed, part of the decline in participation in training that occurs with age can be attributed to a decline in the percentage of people who hold a post-school qualification. However, this is not the case for people who are unemployed. Given the educational attainment profile of this group, more people who are unemployed are participating in training at older ages than would be the case if the educational attainment profile of the unemployed followed the same pattern as that of the employed and did not rise with age.

Employment and training by industry

The percentage of the workforce participating in different types of training varies across industries. Differences in training participation rates across industries can be attributed to a number of factors including the following:

- The proportion of the workforce working casually—VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1999) report that permanent workers were more than one and a half times more likely than casual workers to have received employer-provided training within the previous year and twice as likely to have participated in in-house training.

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- The rate of adoption of new technology—training is required to upskill the existing workforce as new technology is introduced.
- The capital intensity of the industry—training is required so that the capital equipment can be utilised efficiently.
- The size of the enterprises in the industry—large companies and public sector agencies (with at least 100 employees) spend almost four times as much on structured training as small enterprises with less than 20 employees (see Ball & Robinson 1998, p 80.)
- The proportion of wage and salary earners relative to employers.

Details on the percentage of employed persons who participated in training in each ANZSIC industry group are shown in table 3.14. Across all industries, 78 per cent of employed persons participated in training. The industries with the highest training participation rates were 'electricity, gas and water' (94%), 'education' (93%), 'finance and insurance' (90%) and 'government administration and defence' (90%). The industries with the lowest training participation rates were 'agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting' (68%), 'retail trade' (68%), 'transport and storage' (63%) and 'accommodation, cafes and restaurants' (72%).

It is necessary to examine the age structure of the Australian workforce by industry, since if a high proportion of older workers are employed in industries with relatively low training participation rates, then industry of employment could account for the relatively low training participation rates for older workers. The age structure of the Australian workforce is shown in table 3.15.

Industries with at least a third of their workforce aged 45 years and over or with a relatively high proportion of their workforce aged over 55 years, include 'agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting', 'education, health and community services', 'electricity, gas and water supply' and 'transport and storage'.

Although 'agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting' and 'transport and storage' are industries with low training participation rates and a relatively old workforce, it is not universal that industries with low training participation rates employ an older workforce relative to industries with high training participation rates. Both the retail trade and 'accommodation, cafes and restaurants' industries have relatively low training participation rates and a relatively young workforce. In addition, some of the industries with relatively high training participation rates, namely 'electricity, gas and water' and 'education' have a relatively old workforce.

Once unemployed, older workers on average, particularly men, tend to be have a relatively high duration of unemployment. The low training participation rate of older workers suggests that, on average, an employer is less likely to train an older person than a younger person. Therefore, older workers in declining industries with low rates of labour mobility are more 'at risk' of having difficulties in the labour market compared with older workers in

Table 3.14: Percentage of employed persons who have undertaken training in the last 12 months, by industry (per cent), 1997

	Study or training courses undertaken							
			External training					
Industry	Studied in 1996	In-house	Employer supported	Total	Total	On-the-job	Some training undertaken	Total
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	4.9	6.2	4.2	23.7	32.3	59.8	68.0	100.0
Mining	9.0	57.4	21.8	27.0	70.4	72.1	88.8	100.0
Manufacturing	9.7	25.1	8.6	13.6	39.8	67.0	74.7	100.0
Electricity, gas and water	24.2	61.1	15.7	18.7	79.8	83.0	94.2	100.0
Construction	10.9	9.9	5.2	16.2	31.6	60.7	67.9	100.0
Wholesale trade	9.8	25.9	13.5	22.5	45.6	72.0	81.1	100.0
Retail trade	15.2	19.6	5.7	14.0	40.0	60.4	68.0	100.0
Accommodation, cafés and restaurants	16.9	16.2	6.0	13.2	37.9	65.2	71.9	100.0
Transport and storage	6.9	31.4	7.2	13.5	42.0	58.3	68.3	100.0
Communication services	8.5	51.4	6.4	10.3	61.1	72.0	81.7	100.0
Finance and insurance	16.9	53.8	11.4	21.0	70.2	83.8	90.3	100.0
Property and business services	15.5	24.8	13.3	28.1	54.0	76.3	82.7	100.0
Government administration and defence	16.0	60.7	19.9	25.2	72.8	80.1	89.7	100.0
Education	21.4	55.1	17.5	28.3	76.1	84.4	92.6	100.0
Health and community services	18.3	42.0	17.2	33.4	67.9	78.6	87.4	100.0
Cultural and recreational services	12.7	23.6	8.8	21.7	46.1	75.9	81.2	100.0
Personal and other services	14.0	29.7	10.4	22.8	51.9	69.2	78.0	100.0
All industries	13.7	30.1	10.6	20.6	50.3	70.1	78.0	100.0
Total ('000s)	**1136.3**	**2492.9**	**875.3**	**1704.5**	**4166.1**	**5809.5**	**6461.13**	**8283.5**

Source: ABS Education and Training Experience Survey, cat no 6278.0.

growing industries. Difficulties could include being unable to secure longer hours of work if employed part-time and being unable to secure employment in another industry.

Taken together, information on past trends of employment growth, forecasts of future growth in employment and an indicator of labour mobility give a representation of opportunities facing older workers employed in particular industries. Details on past trends in employment growth for full-time and part-time employment and the proportion of the workforce of each industry employed part-time are shown in table 3.16. The short-term forecast annual rate of growth in employment by industry and a measure of labour mobility for each

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industry are shown in table 3.17. A low percentage of workers remaining in the same industry over a 12-month period indicates a high level of labour mobility.

Industries such as 'electricity, gas and water supply', and 'manufacturing' have experienced negative or low rates of employment growth in recent times and are forecast in the short term to have negative employment growth. Both industries experienced negative growth in full time employment over the five years to May 1998, although part-time employment in manufacturing expanded over the period. Both industries had relatively low rates of labour mobility in 1996. In the 'electricity, gas and water supply' industry 38 per cent of the workforce are over 45 years of age and 7 per cent are over 55 years of age. In manufacturing, 31 per cent of the workforce are over 45 years of age and 10 per cent are over 55 years of age. Older workers in these industries are more 'at risk' of having difficulties in the labour market compared with older workers in growing industries. Consequently, it is important that such workers have access to training to assist their labour market mobility.

Table 3.15: Age profile of the Australian workforce, by industry (per cent), November 1998

Industry division	15-29	30-39	40-44	45-49	40-49	50-54	55-59	50-59	60-64	65-69	60-69	70+	Total
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	19.8	21.8	11.6	10.9	22.5	11.8	8.4	20.2	7.7	4.0	11.7	4.0	100.0
Mining	23.0	33.6	14.4	12.5	26.9	10.0	4.7	14.7	1.8	0.0	1.8	0.0	100.0
Manufacturing	28.5	28.2	12.6	11.1	23.6	9.9	5.9	15.8	2.8	0.6	3.4	0.4	100.0
Electricity, gas & water supply	19.1	27.4	16.0	19.4	35.4	10.8	6.7	17.5	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.0	100.0
Construction	29.3	27.3	13.3	10.3	23.7	9.2	6.7	15.8	3.3	0.4	3.7	0.1	100.0
Wholesale trade	28.2	28.2	12.4	11.6	23.9	9.4	5.9	15.3	2.8	0.9	3.7	0.6	100.0
Retail trade	51.6	17.6	9.5	7.8	17.3	6.8	4.0	10.8	1.8	0.6	2.4	0.3	100.0
Accom, cafés & restaurants	50.3	18.9	8.1	9.5	17.6	6.9	3.5	10.3	2.3	0.3	2.6	0.2	100.0
Transport & storage	22.4	27.0	13.4	13.5	26.9	12.7	6.8	19.5	2.9	0.9	3.8	0.4	100.0
Communication services	26.8	28.3	14.2	16.7	30.9	7.1	4.6	11.7	1.4	0.8	2.2	0.2	100.0
Finance & insurance	33.5	31.9	12.3	10.5	22.8	6.1	3.1	9.1	1.0	0.8	1.8	0.9	100.0
Property & business services	28.1	26.6	12.7	12.3	25.0	10.5	5.4	15.9	2.6	1.0	3.7	0.7	100.0
Government admin. & defence	18.7	28.0	16.4	15.0	31.4	11.7	7.3	18.9	2.2	0.6	2.8	0.2	100.0
Education	17.6	23.5	16.5	17.9	34.4	13.5	6.8	20.3	2.5	1.1	3.7	0.5	100.0
Health & community services	22.2	23.8	15.8	14.7	30.5	12.5	7.5	20.0	2.2	1.0	3.3	0.3	100.0
Cultural & recreational services	42.6	22.9	10.5	7.5	18.0	7.7	4.2	11.8	2.7	1.6	4.3	0.4	100.0
Personal & other services	32.8	25.7	12.5	11.2	23.7	9.2	5.2	14.4	2.6	0.5	3.1	0.3	100.0

Source: Unpublished data from the ABS labour force survey

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Table 3.17: Forecast Annual rate of growth in employment and labour mobility, by industry

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	Labour mobility 1996
Industry	History	Forecast	Forecast	Percentage remaining in same industry
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	2.1	-3.0	0.9	94.8
Mining	-4.1	-3.7	-11.2	91.2
Manufacturing	-0.7	-3.5	-0.6	94.1
Electricity, gas & water supply	-3.1	-1.9	-6.1	94.4
Construction	1.9	5.3	0.0	93.4
Wholesale trade	1.4	1.9	2.2	93.7
Retail trade	0.7	4.2	3.2	91.3
Accom., cafes & restaurants	1.2	2.8	3.9	85.4
Transport & storage	-0.6	4.3	2.2	95.0
Communication services	-9.3	-0.4	1.7	94.9
Finance & insurance	-1.4	4.4	-0.9	94.5
Property & business services	8.2	5.4	5.0	92.5
Government Admin. & defence	-7.1	0.0	1.1	94.2
Education	0.2	3.6	-0.1	95.7
Health & community services	3.7	3.8	2.5	96.2
Cultural & recreational services	5.5	1.9	2.9	87.8
Personal & other services	6.9	0.1	3.3	94.4

Source: Forecasts derived from Econtech, MM2 model, 1998-99; ABS cat no. 6209.0

By examining the age structure of the Australian workforce by occupation, it is possible to determine if a high proportion of older workers are employed in occupations with relatively low training participation rates. If this is the situation then occupation could account for the relatively low training participation rates for older workers. The age structure of the Australian workforce by occupation is shown in table 3.19.

Examination of the occupational age structure of the Australian workforce indicates that occupations with relatively high participation rates of training also have relatively high proportions of older workers. Over a third of all managers, professionals and associate professionals are over 45 years of age and over 10 per cent of these occupational groups are aged over 55 years of age. However, 10 per cent of all labourers are over 55 years of age. This occupational group is located at the other end of the scale in terms of percentage of the workforce participation in training.

Conclusions

The importance of older workers as participants in the labour market is increasing over time because of demographic changes that are taking place and altering the profile of the Australian population and the labour market.

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Table 3.16: Shifts in full-time employment and employment growth by full-time/part-time categories by industry (per cent)

	Proportion of the workforce employed full-time	Average annual growth in employment over the five year period May 1993 to May 1998 (%)		Average annual growth in employment over the one year period May 1997 to May 1998 (%)	
	May-98	**Full-time**	**Part-time**	**Full-time**	**Part-time**
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	77.2	1.9	0.7	-2.4	2.7
Mining	96.2	-1.0	8.5	4.7	21.2
Manufacturing	88.7	0.1	1.8	-4.2	6.3
Electricity, gas & water supply	97.9	-9.2	-15.7	-3.7	-7.1
Construction	86.8	2.6	0.8	7.6	2.9
Wholesale trade	84.7	0.6	2.1	3.4	13.9
Retail trade	56.4	0.3	3.9	4.0	-1.8
Accom, cafes & restaurants	53.9	3.3	4.4	5.3	-0.2
Transport & storage	85.6	1.3	4.4	-2.2	12.7
Communication services	85.5	2.3	7.1	-13.2	7.1
Finance & insurance	81.8	-0.1	4.2	1.8	3.2
Property & business services	75.8	7.0	6.6	9.2	7.5
Government admin. & defence	87.4	-2.9	1.0	-8.5	-8.0
Education	66.6	0.3	3.8	2.0	5.5
Health & community services	59.8	2.3	4.6	3.5	9.2
Cultural & recreational services	58.9	2.7	6.2	-6.2	12.3
Personal & other services	70.2	2.6	3.0	1.0	-2.1
All industries	**73.8**	**1.5**	**3.9**	**1.4**	**3.9**

Source: ABS Labour Force Australia, ABS cat. No. 6204.0 and 6203.0

Employment and training by occupation

The percentage of the workforce participating in different types of training varies across occupations, with 95 per cent of professionals undertaking some form of training in the 12 months prior to being surveyed in 1997, compared with 63 per cent of 'intermediate production and transport workers' and 62 per cent of 'labourers and related workers'. Details about the percentage of employed persons who undertook training in the last 12 months, defined by occupation, are provided in table 3.18.

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Table 3.18: Percentage of employed persons who undertook training in the last 12 months, by occupation, 1997

	Study or training courses undertaken							
		External training						
Occupation	Studied in 1996	In-house	Employer supported	Total	Total	On-the-job	Some training undertaken	Total
Professionals	20.4	47.8	21.4	36.4	74.2	89.4	94.6	100.0
Associate professionals	14.3	35.0	12.6	23.5	55.8	75.0	82.6	100.0
Tradespersons and related workers	15.6	20.2	7.3	16.4	42.3	66.7	75.2	100.0
Advanced clerical and service workers	12.5	27.0	10.2	19.1	46.3	71.1	77.9	100.0
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	14.6	36.2	9.4	18.0	56.1	73.8	83.2	100.0
Intermediate production and transport workers	6.4	22.1	4.7	10.3	33.3	52.1	62.5	100.0
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	15.3	22.7	4.5	12.4	41.5	58.5	66.8	100.0
Labourers and related workers	7.1	15.4	2.6	9.2	28.3	52.8	62.0	100.0
All occupations	13.7	30.1	10.6	20.6	50.3	70.1	78.0	100.0
Total ('000s)	**1136.3**	**2493**	**875.3**	**1705**	**4166.1**	**5809.5**	**6461.1**	**8284.0**

Source: ABS Education and Training Experience Survey, cat no 6278.0.

Table 3.19: Age profile of the Australian workforce, by occupation November 1998

Occupation	15-29	30-39	40-44	45-49	40-49	50-54	55-59	50-59	60-64	65-69	60-69	70+	Total
Managers/ Administrators	8.8	22.7	16.3	15.7	32.0	14.9	9.9	24.8	5.8	3.2	9.0	2.7	100.0
Professionals	22.1	27.9	15.4	14.0	29.3	10.7	5.9	16.6	2.4	1.2	3.6	0.5	100.0
Associate professionals	22.8	26.8	14.3	13.5	27.8	11.5	7.1	18.6	2.7	0.8	3.5	0.5	100.0
Tradespersons and related workers	34.9	26.7	12.3	10.1	22.3	7.6	5.3	12.9	2.4	0.5	2.9	0.2	100.0
Advanced clerical and service workers	24.9	27.4	13.4	12.2	25.6	12.5	5.4	17.9	2.8	0.7	3.5	0.7	100.0
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	35.8	25.2	11.9	11.3	23.2	9.2	4.2	13.4	1.7	0.5	2.2	0.3	100.0
Intermediate production and transport workers	35.8	25.2	11.9	11.3	23.2	9.2	4.2	13.4	1.7	0.5	2.2	0.3	100.0
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	57.0	15.2	7.6	7.8	15.3	5.9	3.8	9.7	1.6	0.7	2.3	0.4	100.0
Labourers and related workers	38.3	21.2	10.6	10.4	21.0	9.3	5.8	15.0	3.3	0.7	4.0	0.4	100.0

Source: Unpublished data from the ABS labour force survey

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The main issue facing older workers in the labour market is the length of time it takes to secure employment once they have become unemployed. Older workers are no more likely to become unemployed than are people aged 45 years and under. However, once unemployed, it takes older people longer to find a job compared with the situation in the past. Consequently, the number of discouraged workers in older age groups is increasing. This group of people who are marginally attached to the labour market does not tend to participate in training so their ability to re-enter the workforce is being further compromised by a lack of current skills.

The growth in jobs is predominantly in part-time jobs so while most unemployed people are looking for full-time work it is more likely that a part-time job will be secured rather than a full-time job.

For some people, participation in the labour market continues well after the age of 70. Furthermore, there is a group of people who continue to work relatively long hours until 55 or 60 years of age. Therefore it is important for older workers to be able to access training to improve their workplace productivity and mobility within the labour market.

Participation in training declines with age. This has major implications for older workers in declining industries and lower skilled occupations who are looking to move to other industries of employment and who require retraining to realistically make such a move. Access to training will be further reduced for some older workers depending upon their attachment to the labour market, linguistic background, level of education, industry of employment, and occupation of employment.

The age profile varies by industry and occupation with some industries and occupations displaying a relatively aged work force. However, it is not universally the case that industries and occupations with a relatively old workforce also have low training participation rates or that industries and occupations with a relatively young workforce also have high training participation rates. Therefore, the industrial and occupational profiles of older workers do not account for the decline in participation in training with age.

Case studies

Kate Barnett

Mature people in the workforce often face discrimination when seeking employment because of 'ageist' attitudes on the part of employers. In reality, the capacity to contribute effectively in the work environment is more appropriately determined on an individual basis, and in relation to a range of attributes, of which age is only one factor.

This chapter presents the experiences of 12 people over the age of 45 in the labour market and the role played by training and other learning opportunities in their participation in the labour force. It is based on one-to-one interviews which are reported as case studies, followed by a discussion of findings from the case studies.

In using age to define groups of people there is a tendency to assume homogeneity and this is particularly apparent in relation to older people. Such assumptions encourage generalisation and stereotyping, and older people are often regarded and depicted on the basis of stereotypes. As discussed in earlier chapters, often these stereotypes are negative and act to limit effective participation in work, the community and the lives of family and friends

The 12 people studied were selected to reflect the diversity of the mature workforce. Those interviewed were identified on the basis of the following characteristics:

- *Gender* – five men and seven women provided case studies.
- *Location* – four people live in New South Wales, four live in Victoria and four in South Australia.
- *Cultural and linguistic background* – two people were born in non-English-speaking countries and came to Australia as refugees.
- *Occupation* – interviewees worked in a variety of occupations and all but one changed occupations in recent years.
- *Industry* – the people studied worked in a variety of industries and eight transferred from one industry to another in recent years.

- *Labour force participation* – two people are currently unemployed, five are self-employed and five are wage and salary earners.
- *Age* – four people are aged between 45 and 49, four between 50 and 54, three between 55 and 59 and one is aged between 60 and 64 years.

Although the experiences of each of those studied is unique, what they have in common is the need to have coped with a change in their labour force status and to have sought employment as a mature labour force participant. For seven people, this change has been forced on them—in the case of five of them by retrenchment. For the remaining five, the change has been self-motivated.

The degree to which formal training, recognised qualifications, and informal learning opportunities have assisted them in adapting effectively to such change has been a focus of the case studies. The transferability of skills and experience has been explored across both occupational and industry boundaries and in relation to other factors such as individual flexibility which have affected their labour force mobility. Those interviewed have identified the extent to which their age has constituted an impediment to this mobility. In addition, information has been sought about how learning is viewed by the mature worker—the reasons for seeking learning opportunities and the factors which discourage participation in training and other forms of learning.

The case studies

Erica

Erica's first qualification and career was in architecture. She developed this into a related career in property management within government, then in the private sector. She was recently retrenched and has taken the decision to pursue her property management career in self-employment where she believes she will be less vulnerable to management decisions determining her employability and security.

Retrenchment has had a profound impact on Erica's attitude to work, on her belief in her self and her capabilities and on the significance she attaches to being in control of her working life. However, she has been able to transfer her expertise to a different industry and from employment to self-employment by letting go in order to move forward. As she says:

> *One of the lessons I've learned is that in wanting something so much, you can't let it go… but I pride myself on being a flexible person who embraces change … and I have applied that to being retrenched.*

Following five years of work as an architect, Erica's knowledge and skills in property management began with a further five years in project management for large housing and public buildings projects. After the birth of her first child she resigned from the public sector and joined a large telecommunications firm where she began working in project management. Her work at that time revolved around the fitting out of the firm's offices and progressed to being responsible nationally for commercial property.

This period of Erica's career development was particularly demanding, not only because of the level of responsibility and the complexity of the tasks involved, but because it involved extensive travel and a continuing demand for skill development. The firm supported her to undertake a Graduate Diploma in Management and provided extensive training, much of which involved business management as well as knowledge and skills with specific relevance to her work situation. In turn, she established a customer-driven training program for staff as part of her own development of her staff team. Erica had her second child during this period.

The telecommunications company provided the most significant training for Erica's career. During her public sector working life, very little training of importance had been provided and her knowledge base derived from her architecture degree and on-the-job learning. Erica cites her graduate diploma in management and the management training provided by the company as having been of considerable relevance to the work situation and to other work roles. In fact, the transferability of her expertise ultimately enabled her to shift from the telecommunications to the finance industry.

Reviewing the role played by formal training, Erica believes that her learning has been derived from a combination of this training, the opportunities provided to her as a result of this training, and her interactions with other people in the work setting. In her view, the value of formal training is ultimately determined by how learning is applied and the individual's capacity to learn informally; through networking for example.

This has been most apparent in the past four months when she has made the transition from one industry to another, and from being a wage and salary earner to self-employment. Erica's change was precipitated by an external management review of purchasing operations, the recommendations of which saw Erica in disagreement with other senior managers (none of whom were property specialists). She believed that they did not understand the implications of the review's recommended directions for the firm and she refused to abandon her standpoint. In hindsight, she is glad that '. . . I remained true to myself'.

Although most of her working life at senior management level has seen Erica as one of few women—sometimes the only woman in her group—this was the first time that she perceived that her gender had created difference. Her dissension led to her being called to the general manager's office—she wryly observes that this occurred on 'Groundhog' Day (1st February 1999)—to be told of a restructure and that there was no longer a role for her in the new organisation. She was asked to leave the same day.

Erica's initial reaction was one of shock. She describes being unable to eat, sleep or function normally in the short term, followed by a period of retreat as she assessed her situation and sought strategies for addressing the pain of rejection. Until her retrenchment she saw herself as invincible, and understood quickly that her life up to that point had been a charmed one. Retrenchment had been the first rejection in her life and for a while she believed that her career had been destroyed forever. She explored the possibility of wrongful dismissal, but decided that she would cope more effectively by moving forward and creating new opportunities rather than fighting for a work role which she needed to leave behind. Erica also decided that if it was retribution she was seeking, this would be best gained by being even more successful in a new career.

The transition began with outplacement counselling—assistance with identifying new directions for work, resumé preparation, job application and interview techniques, personality inventory testing and a structured supportive focus on creating new work opportunities. Erica found this course to be extremely useful and began to actively consider alternatives in other industries where her skills could be transferred. She undertook a self-employment training program through the outplacement counselling firm.

Erica had unsuccessfully applied for a number of positions but perceived that age was likely to be a barrier in obtaining an appropriate position in the corporate environment. Subsequently, she decided to form a consultancy connecting property management with management consulting and then formed a partnership to establish a new business with these specialisations.

Erica's period of adjustment and transition was eased by the combined influence of three months' salary in lieu of notice, a package, outplacement counselling and the support of family and friends. She believes that these components of support together with an intact self esteem, enabled her to cope effectively.

Not long after the establishment of her new business Erica was recommended for a position with a major Australian bank. Although she proved to be too senior for this position, the bank worked around her abilities. This involves establishing a strategic plan for the bank's property and corporate real estate. Although offered a paid position, she negotiated to be contracted rather than employed. She is undertaking her new position on a part time basis leaving her free to build her consultancy business.

Looking back six months later to the time of her retrenchment, Erica sees that it has presented her with the opportunity to leave a work situation which was stressful and to extend the expertise which she has developed in the past decade. The experience has reinforced the importance for her of the values which she upholds, particularly that of integrity. The position which she maintained and led to her retrenchment has been vindicated, both from a strategic perspective and in relation to her value base.

Erica prides herself on being a flexible person, who embraces change. Ironically, her retrenchment was presented as resulting from her 'resistance to change'. She believes that had her former employers been correct she would not have coped so effectively with the loss of her job, and as she saw it then, her career. For Erica, the challenge in addressing her changed circumstances lay in being able to let go of a career which she wanted a great deal and which meant so much to her. Her goal now is to ensure that she never again allows herself to be in a position of such vulnerability.

Catherine

Catherine has been unemployed for three years. She has had an outstanding career in health administration, and has an impressive list of formal qualifications and awards and has sought work within the industry where she built this career. Retrenched upon the closure of the hospital which, in her role as chief executive officer (CEO), she had built from a small community organisation to a state-of-the-art facility, Catherine has in many ways lost more than a job. 'This was my life's work. My pursuit of excellence in patient care was over'. In seeking meaningful employment, she has encountered rejection and age discrimination, and is in the process of accepting that she will need to create new opportunities based on the skills and knowledge which she has developed over the past decade.

With a background in nursing, Catherine's career began with a series of general nursing appointments, moving from these to becoming a senior sister for an infant welfare centre, and then coordinator of maternal and child health services for a local government authority. Thirteen years ago Catherine became Director of Nursing for a district community hospital, progressing to the position of Executive Director of Nursing and then CEO of that hospital. She spent a total of 11 years with this hospital and during this period discovered a capacity for management and leading change.

Under Catherine's leadership, the hospital grew in size and in its provision of progressive treatment facilities, achieving widespread recognition for its renal services, and reaching significant benchmarks in quality care. Financially, the hospital was able to increase patient throughput while achieving an operating surplus in its budget. In the 11 years of Catherine's direction, more than 23 000 patients received services, there were no litigations or coronial enquiries, no WorkCover claims in six years and an infection rate below the required benchmark for the industry. The hospital had become one of the most cost effective and efficient public hospitals in the State. Catherine received numerous awards in recognition of her work.

However, the hospital was closed as part of a statewide restructuring process, and its infrastructure was demolished as part of an assets disposal program. It is clear that her role as CEO had provided Catherine with the opportunity both to pursue a vision in health care while developing her own organisational and management skills.

> *My work had meaning in my life. It wasn't just a job. It was a passion. Over the past 36 years in health care I had wanted to make a real difference to people's lives. I know that I achieved that and more . . . I was a health care professional who would not compromise excellence. The patient was the centre of my universe.*

The closure of the hospital has resulted in more than loss of employment, and has significant personal impact because of her strong identification with the hospital and her role in its development.

Catherine began searching for another role as a hospital CEO, but such positions have were unavailable. She has also sought management roles with existing hospitals in the network but this too has been unsuccessful. Given her public and vociferous condemnation of the closure of her hospital, it is likely that Catherine will be blocked from employment of this nature. She has applied for 35 such positions, sought work through her health networks and received only one interview. She is demoralised and bewildered by rejection in the face of a highly successful career.

At the time of the closure and the absence of available CEO positions, Catherine's employer asked her to take two months' annual leave but also offered her career counselling, which she undertook. During her leave, the announcement was made that she had won an Australia Day Award. At the same time, she was offered a six month project management position, and this was followed by three months redeployment during which time she was advised to market herself to the other CEOs in her health network.

In the course of her search for equivalent employment, Catherine was advised by some that she was *'just too old'* and that she should simply retire quietly. Another CEO suggested that she turn to voluntary work. Catherine describes the experience as *'profound and soul destroying'*. She felt isolated and set daily goals of seeking work and keeping busy.

> *I had become one of the silent unemployed … no pension, no ability to access superannuation, and diminished cash flow. I was eroding my asset base just to live. I was unemployable at the mature age of 54 years. In days gone by this was considered to be your peak years, now these years were filled with disillusionment and doubt… there was a deep void in my life.*

The opportunity to apply the expertise she has developed over her working life looks possible only by changing to another industry. Formal training has given credentials in the health field as well as in management. Over a period of 27 years, Catherine has completed three nursing certificates, a diploma in nursing administration, a bachelor of arts and a master of business administration. In the final two years of her role as CEO, she participated in numerous professional development seminars and conferences, most of which focussed on health administration and management.

While she has been seeking employment, Catherine has continued to seek both formal training as well as unstructured learning opportunities; mainly in the form of extensive reading. Most recently, at a cost of some $1400, she completed a TAFE Certificate IV in assessment and workplace training, to enable her to teach in the nursing field. She is also a member of several boards in the health industry.

Catherine is currently considering a number of occupations. These include lecturing in the health field, conference organisation and management consulting. As she recovers from the loss and the wounds heal she is increasingly able to identify her level of expertise and its potential applicability to other endeavours.

Jack

Jack left a career in purchasing following two retrenchments, the impact of which deterred him from seeking continued employment in the corporate sector and led him to establish his own business as a massage therapist. This has been a radical change both in terms of occupation and industry, and from employment to self-employment. There has been an accompanying significant change in lifestyle, which reflects his decision to take a new direction in work and life.

Until 40 years of age, Jack had worked in a number of different jobs which took him from sales and purchasing to a senior role in purchasing as part of a growing role in management. He did not start his working life in this field, having been apprenticed to a major airline as a ground engineer when he left school. The work did not suit him and after five years he sought a new occupation.

He began his purchasing career with a succession of jobs involving purchasing for computer stationery manufacturing, and ultimately joined a large multinational company's paper roll manufacturing division where he spent the next 13 years. He then joined a stationery manufacturer with a promotion to senior buyer level.

However, after only 12 months, the purchasing division of this firm was closed on the advice of an external management review. Jack was 44 years of age. He did not think that it would be easy to obtain another paid position but did not consider self-employment because he wanted to remain in his own field and with the familiar. He spent about five months finding another position with a large telecommunications company, again as a senior buyer. Due to a large contract being dishonoured, this company was forced to retrench a number of staff and, again, Jack was a casualty of this process.

The second retrenchment had a profound effect, changing his expectations and forcing him to broaden his horizons. He knew it was time to pursue the independence and control offered by self-employment. He remembers thinking 'I can't handle this anymore'. He now says 'It was the best thing that ever happened to me'. Throughout his working life, Jack had wanted to work for himself, but did not know in what field or how to pursue the ideal. In some ways, the job loss pushed him in the direction he had sought for a long time.

Jack used the opportunity to review his options and to determine what he really wanted from his working life. He decided that working for large companies was unlikely to bring security and likely to bring constant upheaval. He also knew that he was ready to try working from his own business. He then explored areas of interest which would fulfil this goal.

With an interest in sport and following conversations with a friend who was a physiotherapist, Jack identified massage therapy as a possible business. In order to obtain the skills and knowledge needed for this, he reviewed available training programs, which essentially meant a choice between a two year TAFE course or shorter courses delivered by private providers. TAFE was rejected because of its cost, travel time and because he perceived TAFE as having a school-leaver rather than adult learner culture. Taking advice from others in massage therapy, he identified appropriate private training programs and undertook three separate courses over 14 months, at a cost of $2500.

During this period, Jack did not draw on government support, financial or otherwise, obtaining casual work from massage therapists providing him with training and ultimately completing programs accredited with the Australian Traditional Medicine Society (one of the largest professional associations in this field). He has now successfully operated his own business for four years.

Jack's business began by purchasing a rundown massage business in a prime location. His strategy was to build up the business and this meant that from the start he did not need to work for someone else to establish his reputation in his new occupation. He believes that massage therapy is a largely untapped market and that his business has considerable scope.

In terms of training in operating a small business, Jack draws on the experience gained in business management during his career in purchasing. He received a significant amount of formal training at work and relies on his accountant for financial management.

His current learning needs relate to the technical aspect of his business, particularly in relation to anatomy. He achieves this learning through his professional association and similar associations who provide weekend and day courses, which are accessible because they are inexpensive and adult learner friendly. Jack's experience with TAFE has been less positive as he has found the lecturers in his field to be non-practitioners with only a theoretical knowledge of massage. He is interested in participating only in learning opportunities which are practical rather than theoretical formal qualifications. His goals are focussed on continuous improvement of his business and he will seek learning from the most appropriate sources to help him to meet these goals.

The change brought by his new career has been positive and substantial. Jack says his health has improved and that his stress levels are reduced. He works longer hours now but enjoys his new profession and says that for the first time he is happy in his work.

Eleanor

Eleanor has transferred from one occupation to another and from one industry to another. These transitions have been made possible by a combination of formal training leading to recognised qualifications, networks leading directly to employment, and the support of several female mentors. In addition, Eleanor has set employment goals based on her pursuit of interests and has been focussed in fulfilling those goals.

Eleanor's first career was as a secondary school teacher and she has taught across a range of educational systems—government, Catholic, technical and adult education. Despite her passion for educating, Eleanor decided to pursue her long-held interest in design and a newly emerging interest in environmental issues. She began part-time studies in horticulture and design at a horticultural college, while working as a teacher. Through personal networks, Eleanor obtained work in landscape design and slowly established a part-time business. While this could have developed this into a full time business, she was drawn more to broad-scale environmental issues such as, salinity and biodiversity.

Consequently, Eleanor sought a formal training program which would allow her to pursue a career in this field and undertook a masters degree in environmental planning. She began this part time but eventually resigned from teaching, obtained a post-graduate scholarship and gave priority to completing the degree full time. For two years she supported herself with this scholarship, with savings and her landscaping business.

Eleanor's studies linked her to employment opportunities and networks, providing vacation work involving the planning and management of urban parks, and to employment with the government housing authority where she worked in garden design. However, after 12 months Eleanor realised that this work was leading her away from her interests and she applied for a position with the public authority with responsibility for planning and managing open spaces. There was no precedent for the authority to employ staff with design and environmental planning expertise, but Eleanor was highly motivated to work with them and was supported by a female mentor in the authority who acted as a referee and supported her application.

In the next five years, Eleanor was promoted several times. Becoming aware of the need for commercial experience she gained a management position in one of the authority's business units. In this role, she was responsible for income, financial and business management, and undertook a significant amount of training to develop her expertise.

Eleanor undertook a range of short courses in management issues – for example, conflict resolution, negotiation, financial and time management. More significant was a leadership development program provided by her employer in conjunction with a private training organisation. This enabled participants to explore leadership and team building in a practical yet individualised manner.

Eleanor had been fortunate in having the support of a female HR Manager in her organisation who believed that such courses were valuable tools in achieving organisational change as well as providing significant learning opportunities for women. From this springboard, Eleanor was selected to participate in a statewide leadership development program which further contributed to her skill and network development.

Eleanor had been fortunate to this point in having supportive employers and significant mentors behind her. However, she then experienced the reverse with a boss who actively undermined her, making it untenable for her to continue with the authority. She sought professional help from a women's development consultant in order to understand her situation objectively and to identify alternative employment opportunities.

Ultimately her own networks linked her to a position in another government authority with environmental management responsibilities. Her new employer took a risk in employing Eleanor because again, her background and expertise, while relevant, did not follow the traditional qualifications held by the organisation's workforce.

In her new role, Eleanor moved from the city to a large regional centre to manage a natural resource program for the northern rural area of the State. This involved the management of 500 staff. She continued an upward path of promotion, taking on new management responsibilities.

Looking back on the changes made to and by her in relation to her employment opportunities, Eleanor sees that learning opportunities have been crucial to her ability to change occupations and employing industries, as well as to find employment. In terms of formal training, she has been significantly assisted by her Masters degree and by formal management and leadership training programs. However, she believes that she has benefited from taking every opportunity to learn, even from courses which do not seem relevant at the time.

Eleanor sees her ability to move as a mature worker across occupational and industry boundaries as arising from a combination of:

- individual knowledge and skills, and having credentials to reflect this expertise
- personal networks—all of her employment changes have been supported by mentors or networks
- risk-taking employers
- recognising when to engage professional assistance e.g. career counselling
- trusting her own judgement
- pursuing interests and passions, even if their career potential is unclear
- learning when and how to confront
- letting go when things are not going to work out

Eleanor emphasises the importance of letting go: '. . . in removing yourself from negativity you stop seeing yourself as a failure. When you are positive you are in control and you set the pace.'

Eleanor is currently at a crossroads. For personal reasons, she has recently accepted a management role focussing on business reform back in the city. She is uncertain of where her new position will lead her, and of how she will cope with leaving behind a job which she loved and allowed her to pursue her passion in the area of conservation. She believes that in nearing the age of 50, she has limited chance of obtaining employment outside of her employing organisation. There are few opportunities in her field and any alternative options she sees as being based in self-employment.

James

In the space of four months, James has survived being retrenched from a firm which he had joined when it was established in 1984, and has created employment for himself through the development of three business opportunities. The transition is taking James outside his usual occupation and industry, but is also based on the knowledge, skills and networks established within both. Flexibility and adaptability have been crucial as has his existing expertise. This involves two main specialist fields: agriculture and marketing.

James's agricultural background began on his family's orchard, and was followed by studies at agricultural college. He then worked in sales and marketing for several fertiliser companies over a period of years until his 1984 appointment, which was at senior executive level.

Most of James's formal training opportunities were provided from 1984 onwards and included a host of short courses in marketing and in HR, together with a post-graduate diploma in management practices through the Australian Institute of Management and Train the Trainer I and II. His previous employment had been shaped largely by on-the-job, unstructured and unaccredited training—a reflection of training provision at the time. Most of his training has been provided by employers and has been of direct relevance to his work and to the development of a career in marketing, with application to the agricultural industry.

James believes that his learning has been derived from three sources: formal training, from asking questions and from networking. All three sources are significant for him and he sees a synergy between them.

At the age of 58, James was retrenched with one hour's notice. He had spent 15 years with the firm and had won a prestigious international agricultural award and established four patents during that time. However, he has reacted to retrenchment by creating new opportunities based on an overriding goal of establishing independence—financial and in terms of his work life. He wanted to build a business that he describes as 'something of my own' both to pursue a new direction and to ensure independence in employment, and also because he believed that his age and having had open heart surgery would present significant difficulties in relation to superannuation and obtaining paid work.

Like most people who have built a career in a particular industry, James's original search to buy a business was focussed on agriculture. However, his wife suggested that he should widen his horizons and a series of discussions with friends led him to explore hospitality. He has recently become a co-owner of an inner city hotel which provides refreshments, accommodation and gaming machines. James regards his involvement as part-time with specific input relating to administration, accounting, marketing and responsibility for the gaming component of the hotel. Much of his learning will be obtained on the job, but he anticipates that more formal training will be required in relation to the electronic upgrading of the existing accounting system.

James has established a consultancy business specialising in marketing agricultural products. This builds on the expertise gained through his career, but he anticipates that this business will be slowly overtaken as his third business expands. This involves the distribution of liquid fertilisers in Australia for an American company which uses cutting edge technology not yet available in this country. In the USA, this form of fertiliser represents a substantial share of the total market while in Australia only a very small proportion of fertilisers are in liquid form. This untapped market represents a significant business opportunity. Consequently, James will be travelling to the USA to receive training and to establish his working relationship with this company.

Change and his response to change has been a key feature of James's life in the past four months, and for the future which he is creating. The change from paid to self-employment has been significant, particularly in areas like training where much is taken for granted in paid work. He believes that successful adaptation to change is based on widening rather than confining one's horizons and expectations regarding what one can and cannot do.

84 Claire

Claire has had a varied career but one which is linked by several threads. Working primarily in the agricultural sector, she has developed a range of specialist and generic skills through a combination of formal training, on-the-job learning and self-study, and has successfully built these on areas of interest and then applied them to a number of work roles.

Claire spent her formative years in a regional centre and a significant part of her adult life in a rural community. She completed a science degree majoring in organic chemistry at a city university and currently lives and works in the metropolitan area. The knowledge gained from this degree and her love of chemistry have influenced her choice of occupation in the past and in her current work. Although her career has been varied, this specialist knowledge has been a constant thread.

Following graduation, Claire spent a year working with a large organisation, developing a computerised ordering system for them. This area of expertise has been another continuing theme in her work life which she has applied to the different businesses which she has bought or established.

Wanting to become a teacher, and integrating her interest and knowledge of chemistry, Claire undertook an advanced diploma in food science in order to qualify as a home economics teacher. She then worked for a number of years in a small country school during which time she married a farmer and raised two children. The farm was a broad acre farm, producing crops and sheep for domestic and overseas markets. During this period, Claire's skills were developed through formal study and on-the-job learning. She continued to teach but acquired knowledge and skills in the administration of the farm, in investment, in export-related activities, and from supporting her husband in operating the farm. She studied farm management by correspondence through TAFE.

Claire and her husband decided to leave their farm under management and develop new business interests, mainly because factors like the deregulation of the rye market were reducing the return on their capital. Ultimately the farm was sold and Claire reduced her involvement in teaching. As her involvement in several new business ventures grew, she completed this part of her career and focussed exclusively on the development and management of those ventures. This decision also reflected her wish to take on new challenges. She believes that had she remained in the country, she would have developed a career in State politics.

Based on the decision that a city base offered more scope than a rural or regional centre for their new business ventures, Claire and her family relocated to the metropolitan area, initially purchasing a business in fencing construction, and a second which involved owning and operating a food chain franchise. Claire also established a successful clothing manufacturing business, in the course of which she learned a great deal about manufacturing, and built on skills developed in dress making during her training to be a Home Economics teacher. Claire played a key role in computerising each business, and in administration and taxation-related activities.

Claire also taught for two years with a large private VET provider, during which time she developed curriculum and steered this through the accreditation system.

The different business ventures were ultimately sold and for the past four years, Claire and her husband have operated a business which manufactures filters which are largely used by the agricultural sector, but which also have a strong and developing market for metropolitan organisations. The business is growing and benefits from her background in chemistry.

Claire has developed a range of specialist skills through a combination of formal training and on-the-job learning, together with an innate ability to learn quickly and to seize opportunity when this is presented. Her formal training has included her university undergraduate degree, an advanced diploma in teaching, an associate diploma in accountancy (undertaken part-time through TAFE), as well as short courses with TAFE in farm management and in business management, and a certificate course in counselling which was undertaken through a community education provider.

Claire has found these various courses to be interesting as well as relevant to her career development. This in part reflects her choice of formal training programs which reflect an area of significant interest for her. Chemistry, accounting, computing, administration and management all represent areas of extreme interest which have been pursued through formal and credentialled training, and have been of direct relevance to specific work situations.

Programs undertaken have been self-funded and Claire has encountered few barriers in their pursuit, despite having a range of commitments and significant demands on her time. Her involvement in these programs is described by her as being structured around adult learning principles. Her choice of program has been influenced by accessibility in terms of time. For example, her associate diploma in accountancy was undertaken through TAFE rather than through university because it involved less of a time commitment and because her accountant had recommended it to her as being more relevant to actual accounting practice.

The involvement in the franchise business entailed specific training which was provided by the owner of the franchise operation. This required Claire spending concentrated training time interstate, with regular follow-up training on site. To this, she was able to add her own experience in operating a number of businesses, together with her accountancy skills.

In choosing training programs, Claire has not only taken into account the factor of time, but the relevance of the program content to her work situation, the degree to which the training is self-paced, is provided one-on-one, and can be provided on site using her own business equipment. For this reason, her more recent training has been sought from individual training providers who can work with her in this way. This has been particularly evident as she continues to update her computing skills.

Claire identifies two key areas of current and future training need. One relates to the expansion of her business in an area which will require technical knowledge about the operation of carbon filters. Some of this will be gained from the international company with whom she will be working in a strategic alliance. The second area relates to the need to keep pace with changing IT. This will be gained from individual training providers and informally from sharing information with friends and colleagues. She is also open to the possibility of further courses e.g. in the area of business management. However, Claire is also working to achieving the goal of a less structured work life with less ties to a business. At this stage in her life cycle, she sees herself as creating new opportunities which will provide long term security.

Anna

Anna has been an active participant in the formal training system, both in Australia and in her native Czechoslovakia which she left in 1984 for political reasons. This training has provided the qualifications needed to change occupations. However, she has been unable to find appropriate employment in her newly chosen field and fears that her age may be a barrier to her employability.

In Prague, Anna obtained a medical degree specialising in dentistry, which she practised for about ten years. Although her qualifications are recognised in this country she has been unable to obtain registration because (together with 39 of a total of 49 candidates) she failed the clinical component of a series of examinations upon which registration is dependent.

Consequently, the past 15 years have presented Anna with significant change, beginning with unwilling departure from her country of birth, her family and friends, and without the opportunity to say goodbye. She has had to address all of the challenges associated with migration and settlement, from learning a new language and culture, to establishing a new life, to adjusting to the absence of extended family support and friendship and work networks. In the process of migration, she has been unable to continue with her chosen occupation. Much of the change she has undergone has involved loss. This loss has shaped much of her identity.

Nevertheless, Anna is philosophical about these challenges. She has accepted the outcome of not being able to register as a dentist and decided that to appeal would waste valuable time. Instead, she has decided to take a different career path into aged care. The university studies which she has undertaken since reaching this decision reflect this goal.

In 1995, Anna graduated with a graduate diploma in gerontology and two years later with a master of science degree in social gerontology. In the past three years, she has unsuccessfully sought paid work as a care worker. She has had two casual positions in the university system and works as a volunteer in a residential aged care facility. Anna has lost count of the advertisements which she has answered and the phone calls which she has made to employers in the aged care industry. She has had the support of two employment agencies in her quest for work, together with the assistance of university vocational counselling, and has found wide ranging support for her situation. However, she has encountered a lack of available work, either in her home State or interstate.

Anna is concerned that at the age of 52 her opportunity to obtain work is reducing and feels that this rather than her cultural background is the greatest obstacle. She is acutely aware that she lacks the local knowledge and networks which would assist her to obtain employment. While the formal training which she has undertaken has been relevant to her chosen career path, and a useful extension of her previous training, it has not assisted her to obtain ongoing paid employment. She is willing to undertake any other training which would lead to such employment and to travel to obtain this. However, she is aware that future learning needs to be based on practical experience rather than further development of theoretical knowledge.

The training which Anna has undertaken in the field of gerontology has been valuable in many ways because she has based it on a clear choice of direction and because her years of previous life and work experience have enabled her to maximise the learning opportunities provided. She notes that most people assume that learning is something which is given to them while she believes that learning is something which must be developed and applied in order to be of true value.

Anna's medical training was provided in the late 1960s during a period when the Czechoslovakian government instituted a series of reforms including the enabling of its citizens to enter university. Anna is aware of how special this opportunity was in its cultural context, and this makes it even more difficult for her to cope with the loss of her career as a dentist.

Nevertheless, Anna's reaction has been one of strength combined with flexibility of thinking. She believes that people have the choice of reacting to loss and change by coping and being positive or by being negative and miserable. Her lack of bitterness or defeat she sees simply as making the choice to cope.

Robert

Robert has been successful in obtaining employment by transferring skills obtained in one industry to another which offered greater scope for employment. He has shown flexibility and adaptability in responding to changes in employment, and is supported in his current position by an employer that actively seeks the expertise of mature workers.

Robert's career development was focussed for most of his 32 year working life in the government school system, first as a teacher and then as a principal. Five years ago he accepted an employment separation package and bought a small acreage farm where he breeds alpacas. This was as much a lifestyle choice as a business decision. However, the farm is not yet self-sustaining and he is not financially able to retire.

Consequently, in the past five years he has also sought paid employment and established a small publishing business. This took the form of a quarterly literary magazine publishing the writing and photography of secondary school students. Although it addressed a gap in the publishing market, the business was not financially viable and was closed after two years of operation.

Robert's search for employment has been difficult and discouraging. Initially he sought work which drew on his school-related expertise. He sought teaching rather than senior positions in the independent school system, and was willing to accept a lower salary. However, his age and his attainment of senior status in the education system have been deterrents to employers. In most cases his applications did not result in an interview and in the instance where an interview was given, the employer informed Robert that 'stability in my workforce' was important and therefore he would be unsuitable.

While Robert's experience as a principal, in combination with his age, has worked against him obtaining employment as a teacher, it has provided him with a range of administrative skills which have broadened his employment options. These have, in fact, led him finally to successfully obtaining paid work. In seeking an administrative position Robert applied for countless jobs without success. In 1994, he had obtained a seven month position co-ordinating an employment program for a large not-for-profit organisation. In 1999, at the age of 58, Robert obtained a full-time position as administration coordinator with the same employer.

Robert's employer believes that the key challenge involved in employing an older worker is the perception of investment in them and being unsure of the length of time they will be available to the organisation. However, she notes that the same challenge applies to younger workers too. For non-physical work, the issue of physical capability is not relevant and her assessment of Robert's suitability was based on mental capacity and his ability to fit in the office—that is, his interpersonal skills and his acceptance of a female employer who is younger than him.

Under a policy of workforce diversity in his employing organisation, Robert is working with staff whose ages range from 19 to the mid 60s. His employer sees this as appropriate and beneficial. The benefits of employing an older person are described by her as bringing a wealth of experience to the organisation, being self-starting and requiring a minimum of training.

The issue of age was not part of the selection process for Robert's employer. The key incentive to employing an older worker is seen by her as selecting the best person for the job, and the personal and professional qualities brought by them. Selection rested on choosing the most suitable applicant from several people of similar age to Robert.

Robert's current position has required him to develop his accounting skills from a basic to a more sophisticated level and to meet the specific needs of the organisation. He has had to learn two accounting systems because he began working as one system was being replaced by another. His employer has sent him to their head office interstate to participate in a course designed to teach him the new system, but most of his learning has been on the job and involves gradual familiarisation with processes. He believes that he needs to continually update his information-technology-related skills and knowledge in order to keep pace with change and to improve his computer skills, which have been self-taught. He perceives that he also needs human resource (HR)-related training to update the knowledge acquired ten years ago as a principal.

The final ten years or so of Robert's role as a principal provided him with a range of structured and unstructured learning opportunities which he feels have been directly relevant to his current position. Structured training was provided in the HR area and in management issues, and he developed significant administrative expertise through on-the-job experience. This contrasts with his years as a teacher when Robert's training was subject-focussed and of relevance only to the teaching situation.

As an alpaca breeder, Robert has acquired knowledge through reading extensively, attending workshops which are provided by the Australian Alpaca Association (some of these are certificate short courses delivered in association with the Melbourne Institute of Textiles), attending conferences and networking with other alpaca breeders. There are TAFE courses available interstate, but these require students to travel and study on-site and this is a deterrent for Robert. The alpaca breeding industry is unusual in that it has a limited research base, and the differences between the alpaca's native South American and Australian environments are still being identified. Consequently, much of the learning is acquired as the industry evolves. As a small acreage farmer, Robert has had previous experience with another property and this has also been advantageous to managing his current farm. He regards his role as an alpaca breeder as requiring ongoing learning, particularly about the impact of environment on the production of alpaca fibre.

Both Robert and his wife had some background in publishing. His wife had completed a TAFE desktop publishing course and had editorial experience and Robert expanded his computer skills during his involvement with the business. Their work with two printing firms entailed a significant transfer of skills and they were assisted with advice from the small business centre.

Taken together, the learning opportunities, both formal and informal, which Robert has had during his years as a principal and in establishing small businesses, have given him a sufficiently wide range of skills to enhance his ability to obtain paid employment. He has also been assisted by his current employing organisation which has a policy to encourage the employment of mature workers.

Robert regards his work life as a continuous learning curve, and finds that the chief obstacle to training in a structured and formal way is the management of competing priorities on his time, and a sense that he has less energy for study because of the demands of a full time job. At present, his learning efforts are focussed on the work environment.

Robert believes that mature workers have much to offer in terms of experience and a stronger commitment to the job rather than to their own advancement. He believes that being seen to be overqualified can work against the mature applicant, which was his experience when seeking employment in the education field. Robert argues that the older worker usually wants a lifestyle change and does not want the hassle of being in a senior role. As he says: 'I've been there; done that. I don't have to prove to anyone else or to myself that I can do it.'

Suelyn

Suelyn's career development has been marked by significant change, involving change in her chosen field of study, change in occupation, and a move from 17 years in government employment to self-employment as the owner of an art framing business. She has shown significant adaptability and the capacity to identify and pursue opportunities, and in the process has developed a range of skills through a variety of learning paths.

Suelyn began her formal studies in Vietnam where she was born and lived until she and her family left as refugees almost 20 years ago. She had undertaken a science degree to second year when a change of government brought about policy which promoted manual labour and devalued intellectual pursuit, as part of an overall drive for social equality. Suelyn was sent to a 're-education' camp for intellectuals, but ultimately escaped with members of her family to Malaysia. After a few months in a refugee camp she and her husband were sent to Australia while other family members were sent to North America.

At the age of 23 Suelyn began establishing a new life, working initially in a number of factories. Her skills in English enhanced her ability to find work, together with strong determination. Her first job involved sewing upholstery for a car manufacturing company. She had been offered the position if she could sew a straight line and spent the next few days practising on the machine of another member of the Vietnamese community. Although the factory machine involved a different degree of skill, she managed to pass the test and began her first job.

Eventually, as her bilingual skills became evident, Suelyn was asked to interpret for the personnel section, and through this was able to persuade the factory to give her husband work. Alert to production downturn, she approached a shoe factory on the advice of a Vietnamese friend who worked at this factory. She presented her skills in sewing and interpreting and was employed immediately. The following day, retrenchments began at the automobile plant, but Suelyn had established alternative employment and spent the next year working with the shoe factory.

At this time, she experienced considerable and consistent racism, mainly because the bonus system meant that her hard work gave her higher pay than other workers. She was marginalised and victimised by them and by her supervisor. Her husband had enrolled in an engineering degree and obtained part time work as a waiter, and at this time she was approached by one of the State government's ethnic affairs commissioners because of her ability to speak Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese and Chao-jow (a dialect spoken by Chinese people in Thailand and Cambodia). This is an unusual linguistic combination, but was derived from her parents' own cultural backgrounds.

Suelyn then became an information officer with the State government Ethnic Affairs Bureau and this began a seventeen-year career in government. She had enrolled again in a science degree but her new work created an interest in social work and she studied part time over the next few years to obtain a degree in this field. Suelyn had been mentored in this choice of study by the first Vietnamese student in social work in the State and Suelyn became one of the first Vietnamese social work graduates.

Over time, her career moved from a role in information provision to an increasing role in community development and advocacy for NESB migrants and refugees. She was involved in the establishment of several key services in these areas and began working with domestic violence services to provide culturally sensitive support to Vietnamese women.

It was through her involvement with social workers working in the domestic violence field that Suelyn was approached in 1984 by the State human services department for a full time social work position. At that stage she was about half way through her social work degree. This role specialised in working with the Indochinese community.

Although her work was fulfilling, Suelyn was keen to develop a career in the department and realised that promotion was unlikely while her work remained outside of central agency functions. Building on the experience which she was gaining in these central areas she successfully applied for a senior social worker position in 1991.

The next few years were interrupted by a two year break when she accompanied her husband to China, and by a series of departmental restructures. Suelyn was continuing to gain valuable experience, however, involving management responsibilities and the development of a range of policy-related skills. Her main challenge in the first part of the 1990s involved the complete restructure of a large departmental suburban office, something which included the challenge of being a woman of NESB in a leadership role, in an office which had not been sensitised to cultural diversity. Nevertheless, her restructuring was widely regarded as highly successful, both by the staff involved and by decision makers in central office.

In 1997, Suelyn was transferred to head office in a central policy role with an HR focus. During this time she began a 12 month management development course but did not complete this because she decided to resign her position. The department had continued to restructure and Suelyn was unhappy about the impact of this and her inability to take control of her working life. She believed that remaining with the department meant a limited career path for her.

Taking a holiday to visit family in North America, Suelyn spent time with friends and relatives successfully operating their own businesses and this had the effect of making her consider options for working outside of the public sector. These people had left behind careers of 20 years standing and took major risks to establish their own business and they had reaped a range of benefits as a result.

Returning to Australia in 1998, Suelyn found her department undergoing yet another restructure. In reviewing her career options, she found that she was likely to go backwards rather than forward and negotiated a package as part of her resignation.

Suelyn's next step was major. She moved to another capital city to go into the framed products business with her sister and brother in law. She has learned about production and retailing mainly from on-the-job training provided by her brother in law. However, she has supplemented this with an intensive self-directed learning program encompassing reading about art history, framing, modern art and different artists, participating in guided art gallery tours and discussions with people with expertise in the field. At the same time, Suelyn has learned continuously about buying and managing a business, and marketing and promoting it; mainly through the mentoring of her brother in law and her own aptitude for this. She has not yet seen the need for formal training, although her public sector management course has been significant in contributing to her knowledge and expertise.

The framing business is seen by Suelyn as a means to finance a second business which she is currently developing, and which builds on the knowledge, skills and networks of her role in working with non-English-speaking background communities. This business addresses a significant gap involving the reliance on interpreters for counselling because of difficulties in accessing bilingual therapists. Suelyn's business will act as a broker to link service providers and clients to these therapists.

Suelyn is enthusiastic about the new horizons which have opened to her as a result of self employment. She has discovered that she has an aptitude for business, despite spending most of her working life in not-for-profit organisations, and being loyal to an employer. She states that she is learning new things on a daily basis, whereas had she remained in her employed position, she would be learning little.

In reviewing her work life, Suelyn has encountered significant barriers due to a combination of gender and cultural background. She believes that while employment has been relatively easy because of her specialist skills, promotion has not and that she has experienced the 'glass ceiling' phenomenon. Self-employment has been the only means to career advancement of any significance and, for her, an opportunity for continuous learning.

Steve

Steve's work history has involved a variety of jobs in a range of locations, but his occupational choices have been based on two types of motivation—work which is simply a means of financing a lifestyle and work which is interesting because it allows him to develop particular skills. In the course of 30 years, he has developed a number of skills but has no formal qualifications. At age 50, following an accident which severely damaged one arm, Steve has found the combination of lack of credentials and negative stereotypes about mature workers on the part of employers to be significant barriers to his employability.

When Steve left school, full employment was the norm. There was little pressure to learn a trade or obtain formal qualifications. His first two years were spent working for the State government, where his prospects for advancement were extremely promising. He was promoted and given a range of work experience, and invited to complete a management course, by correspondence. However, Steve found the lack of face-to-face contact unrewarding, and the study itself tedious. At this stage of his life, he wanted to travel and basically enjoy life.

Consequently, he resigned from his position and from the age of 24 began a series of jobs as a waiter as he travelled around Australia, New Zealand, Europe, South Africa and the United Kingdom. He also worked as a part-time model, a tour guide and in clerical and administrative positions—all as a means to finance his travels, spending most of the 1970s and some of the 1980s living and working in different countries.

There have been few formal training opportunities provided in most of these work situations. Steve was trained as a tour operator, but most of his skills have been developed on the job without formal training. Steve's work as a waiter became increasingly specialised and has focussed on corporate functions and exclusive clubs. He has also learned to cook and has been able to offer both cooking and waiting services.

After returning to Australia, Steve had continued to work in this specialised area of waiting, but began pursuing his keen interest in historical research and writing. There is considerable scope for him to develop a business incorporating this expertise, particularly for people wishing to renovate buildings that require a heritage impact analysis and report. He has written a local history book and a book about a famous property, partly out of interest, partly to compensate for his lack of formal qualifications and partly to make effective use of time following his accident.

About four and a half years ago, Steve almost severed his arm when he tripped and fell through a window. Microsurgery and intensive and lengthy physiotherapy have restored most of the use of his arm, but not to the extent needed for working as a waiter. Consequently, Steve was forced to rethink his method of earning an income.

His years of experience in hospitality have given him management expertise and experience and he has applied for many middle management positions. However, his lack of formal qualifications in hospitality combined with his age have been obstacles. He describes interviews being conducted by 25 year olds who rely solely on credentials and discount experience. This has reinforced his decision to abandon the search for this type of work.

Steve then turned to self-employment and identified two opportunities which would also enable him to pursue areas of interest to him, one of which was related to historical research and the other providing para-legal assistance in the forensic psychology field. Using self-taught typing and computer skills, Steve had obtained administrative work with a forensic psychologist prior to his accident. In the course of this work, he devised a system for enhancing the useability of legal documentation.

At that point, he sought the support of the New Employment Initiatives Scheme (NEIS), and had developed a business plan for his proposal. However, the combined impact of his accident and difficulties encountered in accessing the legal system led him to abandon the initiative. He has since focussed on developed his history research business and has established a web site to promote the business.

Steve does not regard formal training as being directly relevant to his past or future work. He believes that the investment of time is too significant and takes him away from writing and creating. The environment of formal learning institutions is seen by him as too restrictive and not sufficiently user-friendly for adult learners. He has great faith in the ability to learn for oneself. As he says: 'I believe everyone needs to train themselves.'

The training and support provided by NEIS has been important, however, and through his involvement with the program he has learned basic accounting and financial management skills. Steve found this to be both relevant and practical and delivered in a user-friendly way.

Steve's key challenge now is to develop his business to a point where it is viable and Steve does not see formal training as playing a key part in reaching this goal. Rather, Steve is focussing on finding a way of marketing his business without significant financial outlay.

Rachel

Seven years ago Rachel made the decision to leave a successful career in senior management in public health and establish her own business based on her skills, knowledge and networks but applying these in new directions. Her consultancy has several components:

- *management and health services consulting*, which includes reviewing health services and programs, and helping health organisations to manage more effectively

- organisational consulting involving helping health organisations to manage more effectively. This includes organisational review, leadership and systems management and is often problem-focussed and short term
- personal directions consulting which Rachel describes as 'working with people who are reassessing the direction of their personal and work lives'

Operating her business involves constant learning and she describes her training as involving participation in structured training programs, linking with experts in areas identified by her as learning gaps, attending conferences and seminars and self-study. She separates her immediate and short to medium term learning needs into two main areas—personal and business skill development.

In the area of personal skill development, Rachel is making an ongoing study of neurolinguistic programming (NLP) through self-study, working with experts in this field and completing certificate courses delivered by private training providers. Because her work involves a significant amount of facilitation in groups, Rachel believes that this field of study provides the skills needed to be effective at the interpersonal level. She says:

> *I can't empower others without first feeling empowered myself; have a vision for an organisation without some sense of my own life purpose; expect others to … balance their lives without some understanding and mastery of this myself… So the old adage 'Before you can change others, you have to change yourself' became my touchstone.*

The business skills needed are those relating to the management of a small business, particularly those involved with managing cash flows, costing projects, business planning and building capital in the business. Rachel relies on her accountant and financial advisor for direction and to enhance her understanding of business management.

She also identified the management of stress which is involved in owning and operating a business as a key skill needing ongoing development. Rachel describes this as involving self-pacing and organisation of time to prevent fatigue. A related capacity is that of planning to ensure she has a range of clients and of skills.

Originally Rachel had trained as a teacher and worked in teaching for the first two years of her working life. She the transferred to education administration in the Commonwealth government, working with overseas and indigenous students under the Colombo Plan. This work combined an interest in developing countries and education. She then worked with the UNESCO Secretariat and transferred from the field of international education to that of international health, working with the World Health Organisation, in policy and administration level.

In the mid 1980s, Rachel participated in the Executive Development Scheme —a management training program which has had a significant impact on her career development, as it did for many participants. Three sets of three month placements were designed to address gaps in participants' knowledge and experience. The program provided Rachel with training in management theory and practice and gave her a theoretical framework for and a validation of the principles which she had applied to middle management.

One of Rachel's skill gaps was the management of large numbers of staff and one of her placements was in a large public hospital where she was responsible for a staff of 300 people. This placement lead to a direct transfer to the field of public health, without which such a transfer would have been unlikely.

Rachel then began a career as a senior manager in public health. With no formal qualifications in the field, she was appointed as State director of a national rehabilitation service, a position which she held for three years and involved taking the organisation through a series of structural changes. Rachel was responsible for a staff of 400 and learned a great deal about both individual and organisational change.

She then became the director of a State AIDS bureau, and this involved addressing the major public health challenge of reducing stigma and increasing public awareness of HIV and AIDS. The job provided significant learning opportunities for Rachel from the experts who worked with her and from stakeholders. Rachel's challenge was to unite these diverse interest groups. She attended numerous conferences which provided further learning opportunities for her.

With both of these public health positions, Rachel had assumed a leadership role with little knowledge about the specific field but with significant knowledge about organisational change and management of change. She believes that mature workers who have years of experience should not avoid seeking work in areas based on specific knowledge if their expertise is transferable. She says that it is important to be aware of one's generalist skills and how bridges can be built between one field and another.

Rachel's third public health position was that of director of planning and service development of a state health service network. She undertook this role during a period of significant change in the health system, involving closures, amalgamations of services and diminishing resources. The service broke new ground, and the expertise she developed and the recognition she obtained from this and her other two senior management positions attracted significant work for her current consultancy business.

In both State government health positions, Rachel was offered little formal training but learned through national and international committee involvement, from her own staff, her own networks and informal learning opportunities that she established for herself. She has also learned from the challenges that she has taken on which have provided significant, albeit risk-laden, opportunities to develop her skills.

In reviewing her career and the learning opportunities provided, Rachel believes that while formal management training has played an important role, it is only one source of the development of her expertise. She describes the work teams of which she has been part as having created positive learning environments for her and other staff, and the individuals involved in some of her formal training programs as contributing to her learning as much as the program itself.

Rachel has undertaken, and continues to do so, considerable personal skill development, particularly in neurolinguistics. She is prepared to invest both time and money in this area of learning, and does so on an ongoing basis through short courses. She plans to complete a masters certificate in the area. However, she states that she does not need further qualifications to prove her ability, and other areas of learning will be focussed on leisure interests as part of her preparation for retirement.

Rachel believes that age does not affect her employability because she is evaluated for her abilities and attitudes. She has authored a book which involved case studying ten people who had made major changes to their careers, some because they were forced to leave their jobs and others who chose a different direction because their work was unfulfilling. She describes her book as being about people who have embarked upon changes which transformed their personal and working lives. In this book, she says:

> *Life is a continuing process of learning and growing. It involves assessing what we have done so far, whether what we are doing now meets our needs, reviewing how our needs might have changed, and setting new goals. This is how we would approach a strategic review of any business or organisation. Our lives are no different. We have to learn to let go of what does not work for us and also what did work for us but no longer does.*

Ken

Ken has developed a career in senior management, primarily in manufacturing. In the past ten years, economic downturn has led to him being retrenched three times. His search for re-employment has been exceptionally focussed and the longest period for which he has been unemployed has been seven months. In recent years, he has transferred his management-related skills from manufacturing to HR and now works with an employment placement agency marketing people to firms seeking contracted work.

Ken began his career with an apprenticeship with the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation and over a seven year period completed an electrical engineering diploma. This was the first of many formal training opportunities.

Six months national service in the navy also provided training, which he describes as an extremely positive learning experience. This also addressed his keen interest in sailing.

Ken's first paid job was with a cable insulation manufacturer where he was a trainee industrial engineer. After two years with this firm, and at the age of 23, he moved to a more senior position as an industrial engineer, where he worked from 1958 to 1972. This was a significant period for Ken, as he was exposed to a range of learning opportunities, many of them testing his capacity, and because his employer was a powerful mentor for him. This firm was involved in the production and distribution of power transformers. His employer was a highly successful businessman and entrepreneur and he gave Ken numerous management development opportunities.

In the mid 1960s Ken was sent to an international engineers conference and then worked in several US factories to obtain further technical expertise in his area of work. At a young age he was promoted from a supervisor level to work superintendent and then manufacturing manager.

In the early 1970s he turned down a promotion opportunity which involved an interstate transfer and from that time his relationship with his employer deteriorated. In 1972, Ken moved to another firm which specialised in engineering. He became warehouse manager and spent six years with them, during which time he acquired a range of HR-related skills.

Next Ken worked with a major seed production company as operations manager, stay in for 11 years until he was retrenched in 1989 as a result of a merger. While with the seed company Ken discovered a keen interest in the computerisation of information for management purposes. He had had some training in this area as part of his management diploma studies, but most of his skills have been self-taught. Much of his work had also involved streamlining storage processes; from building warehousing facilities to operations issues.

In many ways, Ken's retrenchment constituted wrongful dismissal but he did not realise this. Instead, his reaction was to undertake a focussed search for employment. For a time, he undertook contract work for an employment placement agency which subsequently employed him. In his search for work, Ken felt that potential employers regarded his age of 50 as a deterrent. However, he was able to find work relatively easily at that time. He began working for a firm of consulting engineers but two years later was again retrenched, this time because of economic downturn and reduced work availability.

Again Ken began searching for employment. A former employee of the seed firm contacted Ken and asked him to become warehouse manager for the printing firm where he was employed. This meant taking a 50 per cent pay cut and returning to his previous status but Ken felt that he had few options available at that time. As it turned out, he quickly returned to his existing status and salary level. However, the owners of the business wanted to sell and began laying off staff. After about 12 months, Ken had resumed the search for employment and while he obtained short-term contract work, experienced the longest period of unemployment of his career – seven months.

From 1994 until 1997, when he joined his current employer, Ken undertook a number of contracts on a consulting basis. Returning to the employment placement agency, he has become manager of their contracting division which involves marketing retrenched people to firms seeking contracted work.

Training has played a key role in the development of Ken's career in middle and senior management. This has occurred through structured off-the-job courses as well as on-the-job training, both structured and unstructured. This began with his apprenticeship which occurred with a company known for its attainment of quality. Ken had always been ambitious and keen to learn new skills. At one point early in his career he began an accounting course, but abandoned it because it was boring. On the advice of student counselling he undertook a diploma in management. Ken cites the diploma of management as having been extremely useful to many of his work roles because of the generic skills obtained and their relevance to the management situation.

In addition, his work situations have required the development of computer-related skills and he has obtained these through a combination of self-teaching and a six week structured program delivered by Wang. That course was also valuable in his overall computer expertise development.

Ken has experienced a considerable amount of change in employment situation which has been unsettling and could well have defeated many other people. However, he attributes his survival to a combination of factors, most of which rely on attitude. He describes these as being flexible, not being daunted by constant retrenchment, being determined and retaining faith in oneself. Apart from these personal qualities, Ken notes that having personal support is invaluable.

Ken believes that change involves making choices and these choices determine how effectively changed is managed. He states that it is important to identify one's chosen direction and then to ensure that this direction is pursued —to take a proactiv, rather than a reactive, stance when responding to change. When faced with change, including the enormity of retrenchment, Ken says:

> *You have a choice. You need to look at a range of alternatives … and identify where you are going in order to get there. There are three kinds of people in this life—those who make it happen, those who watch it happen and those who were told that it happened.*

Findings

The role of formal training in the workforce experiences of mature workers

Those interviewed regard formal training as one of several methods of learning, and most have sought a variety of paths to developing knowledge and skills. Only Steve has avoided formal training; the remaining 11 identify a range of employment-relevant benefits arising from their participation in structured training programs, and see a continuing role for such programs in their working lives. For some (Eleanor, Anna and Jack), formal training has been pursued specifically to change occupations.

The key difference for the mature worker, compared with young workers, is that formal training is unlikely to be regarded as a means of 'proving' expertise.

In Robert's words: 'I don't have to prove to anyone else or to myself that I can do it.'

The people studied have sought knowledge and skills from training programs in order to fill gaps in their overall expertise. Their years of workforce experience have allowed them to build expertise and to establish credibility in a given field or fields, and unlike the young person seeking entry to the workforce, or who is in the process of building expertise, there is not the pressure to seek credentials and courses which help to establish a knowledge base.

However, those interviewed see themselves as involved in ongoing learning; not only in updating skills computer and IT skills were identified by most of them as needing to be constantly developed) but in adding to their overall understanding of their work. Several are also seeking to develop leisure-related skills as part of a long term preparation for retirement. In summary, the sources of learning identified by the group are:

- *formal training programs,* through university, TAFE, community providers and private providers including professional associations
- *other structured training* e.g. conferences and workshops
- *unstructured training,* obtained on the job
- *self-study*
- *mentors and role models,* usually in the work setting
- *colleagues* in the work setting
- *outplacement agencies,* for some of those who had been retrenched, these agencies had played a key role in learning new skills and in understanding the potential transferability of their existing skills.

Mobility and the mature worker

The ability to move across the labour market has been found to diminish with age, and mature workers experience longer periods of unemployment than younger people (see chapters 2 and 3). In seeking employment, the people studied have either directly experienced age-based discrimination or believe that being over the age of 40 limits their choice of employment—hence their workforce mobility.

The transferability of skills has been a key factor in the case study group's mobility, and critical to this has been their own understanding of their expertise and how this could be applied outside of the occupation or industry with which they are familiar. Equally important has been the degree to which their identity is linked with a particular occupation and their ability to 'let go' and create new career opportunities. In addition, their individual capacity to be flexible and to widen their field of expectation has been significant. In other words, it has not simply been a matter of their individual skills and accompanying credentials, but their ability to adapt to change and to move forward which has been critical to their mobility.

In essence, the identification of transferable skills has required making a strategic and depersonalised assessment of individual capacity and marketability. A few of those interviewed have achieved this independently, but most have required the guidance and support of friends, family, mentors, and employment placement professionals. Finding alternative employment opportunities in which to transfer skills has often depended on the individual's networks, both in guiding them to those opportunities and in providing personal support along the way.

One area which stands out as having provided readily transferable skills involves the occupation of manager. Many of those interviewed had undertaken management and leadership development courses in the past, and described these as having delivered extremely relevant and transferable knowledge and skills. These individuals have been able to transfer quite readily across both occupational and industry boundaries.

Self-employment as a viable option for mature workers

The option of self-employment has been taken by six of those studied, primarily to be independent and to be in control of one's working life. However, this option was also seen as avoiding the difficulties of seeking employment in the face of employers who discriminate against age. For some, retrenchment provided the motivation to fulfil a long held wish for independence, or to avoid facing repeated retrenchment, so negative has this experience been. '… in removing yourself from negativity you stop seeing yourself as a failure. When you are positive you are in control and you set the pace (Eleanor, 48).

In establishing new businesses, most have sought some formal training. In both Robert's and Jack's cases, professional associations have played a key role, being perceived as the only sources of readily accessible, practical training; TAFE being the alternative but involving too much travel time and being perceived as lacking the practical experience required. Past training in management has proven to be highly relevant, regardless of whether this had been received in the public or private sector.

Those who have chosen the option of self-employment see that their need for learning is continuous and seek training which is tailored to their learning and time-related needs, self-paced and user-friendly. There was also a clear sense of an interweaving of business and personal development goals, and therefore, of the training needed to meet those goals. This is not surprising given that those in the study who have chosen self-employment have also made this decision as part of a whole-of-life change of direction.

> *Life is a continuing process of learning and growing. It involves assessing what we have done so far, whether what we are doing now meets our needs, reviewing how our needs*

> *might have changed, and setting new goals. This is how we would approach a strategic review of any business or organisation* (Rachel, 54).

Factors which encourage and which inhibit participation in training

The motivation to participate in training has been driven by some key factors:

- to obtain additional skills, primarily to address a gap in knowledge base
- to establish their own business
- to obtain employment
- to pursue personal development goals
- for intrinsic benefit in pursuing specific interests

Investment in learning opportunities has been determined also by a number of additional factors which have been used as indicators of a particular learning program's appropriateness for them. Of particular importance is the perceived *relevance* of the program, especially when vocational goals are involved, and the *flexibility* with which the program is packaged.

The key barrier to participation in training was stated as competing priorities affecting the amount of time which can be allocated to formal learning experiences. For this reason, programs structured to be brief – e.g. in module form, and are flexible in their participation requirements, are seen as the most appropriate to their needs. It is also important that programs are self-pacing and use adult learning techniques.

For these reasons, those studied have found it difficult to participate in training where scope for individual learning needs is not provided, and which is not sufficiently flexible to allow the learner to address competing priorities. Some of those interviewed described programs which involve groups of students with differing learning needs but not structured to allow self-pacing, or worse, which employ teaching approaches associated with school classrooms as anathema. For reasons of time and relevance, those who are self-employed are more likely to seek training from private training providers who will deliver one-on-one tuition in the learner's own work environment. Many of the training choices made by those studied have been ultimately influenced by time commitments. For example, Claire chose a TAFE program over an equivalent university program for this reason.

Summary and discussion

Andrew Smith

This report has investigated the training implications of the ageing of the Australian population. As people live longer and healthier lives, assumptions about people retiring from work completely at the age of 60 or younger and living lives unconnected to the world of work are giving way to an environment in which an increasing number of older people prolong their working lives past the conventional age of retirement and into what has been, until now, characterised as 'old age'. At the same time as the expectations of people regarding their working lives are changing, the nature of work has also been the subject of significant change in recent years. Fewer people are confident of having a job for life with one employer. The security of employment that was formerly offered by large enterprises and the public sector has disappeared in the wake of constant downsizing. As a result, many more people are experiencing multiple changes in career and older workers often bear the brunt of these enforced changes in working life. Changes in career and the desire of many to remain active in the workforce longer are two of the most important forces reshaping the training and learning experiences of older Australians.

This chapter draws together the findings of the research undertaken for this study, summarises the major themes that have emerged and makes some comments on their policy implications.

The demographic imperative for training and learning

As Misko shows, the Australian population is rapidly ageing in line with international demographic trends. The median age of the Australian population currently at 34 years will increase to about 45 years by 2051. By this time over 25 per cent of the population will be aged over 65 years compared with 10 per cent in 1997. A key contributor to the 'greying' of the population is the increasing health of older people. Advances in medical technology have led to a steady increase in the life expectancy for people, particularly in the developed world. For non-indigenous Australians, life expectancy at birth in 1996 was 81 years for females and 75 years for males. These rates are confidently expected to grow in coming years.

At the same time, the ageing of the population is being accompanied by a significant demographic 'bust', with the lower birth rates of recent years contributing to a steep decline in the numbers of young people aged 19-24 years. The combination of more people living longer and fewer young people in the population will have a significant impact on the age structure of the Australian workforce. As employers compete for a decreasing number of younger workers, they will be compelled to reconsider the role of older workers. As Ball shows, labour force participation rates decline sharply for both men and women after the age of 50 years. In the future it is unlikely that employers will be quite so willing to let their older employees leave or retire as they find it increasingly difficult to recruit younger people. At the same time, the state will find it more difficult to meet the needs of retirees.

The costs of supporting a non-working age population

As Misko shows, governments in developing countries are already experimenting with new arrangements to allow older people to continue earning after their official retirement in order to reduce the financial burden on the state. Individuals also are less likely to wish to give up employment in their 50s and early 60s. Employer sponsored pension plans may not be able to cater for people who could be living into their 80s and beyond. Moreover, the improving health of older people leads to an increasing psychological need to remain active in society and the workforce longer than previous generations. As Ball shows, a growing proportion of men aged 70-74 are remaining in the workforce. There is, thus, a triple dynamic already in place that will increase the participation of older people in the workforce of the future—employers' requirements driven by demographic change, the interests of the state to reduce financial outlays on older people and the needs of older people to remain active longer.

These workforce demographics have great significance for the training and learning of older people. As older workers remain in the workforce longer and are increasingly subject to career change, access to training and learning opportunities will become more important to them. This gives the notion of lifelong learning a particular meaning, as older people increasingly demand training and learning that will enable them to remain in the workforce longer.

Policy implications

Lifelong learning is currently in vogue as a means of recasting the Australian training system for the future. In many ways the debate over lifelong learning has been couched in the rhetoric of creating a more inclusive society by providing learning opportunities for all. However, the demographic imperatives of an ageing population and a reduction in the numbers of younger people entering the workforce bring a hard edge to the concept of lifelong learning. As older people remain at work, the necessity for reorienting the Australian training system towards reskilling of older workers becomes increasingly important.

The capacity to learn

Misko discusses the negative stereotypes that abound concerning the abilities of older people. In particular, older people are cast as being slow to learn and adapt. Yet this stereotype has long been disproved in the literature. Whilst older people may suffer from the physical effects of ageing—reduced aerobic and muscular capacity and an increasing incidence of ill-health—the intellectual capacity of older people is not affected to the same extent by the ageing process. Although there may be evidence of slight memory loss with ageing, older people often have significantly higher levels of relevant experience, which offsets the effects of memory loss and can lead to higher job performance levels than younger people who do not possess the same level of experience. This is another way of characterising the wisdom of the older worker. Most of the psychological evidence indicates that older people do not experience any consistent decrease in intellectual capacity as they grow older; at least not until they enter their 80s or 90s. Thus the ability of older people to learn and of older workers to learn new jobs and new ways of working is not diminished with age.

Some employers have chosen to recognise the positive characteristics of older workers and adapt their recruitment policies to favour older people. Misko cites the case of the Days Inn hotel chain in the USA which was experiencing difficulties with the transient nature of its younger workers. The company implemented a policy of hiring people over the age of 50 years and found that, contrary to the stereotype, these workers learned to operate the computer reservation systems as quickly as younger workers. Moreover, the older workers stayed with the company longer and were able to handle more reservations per day than younger workers.

However, despite the evidence to show that the job performance of older people does not suffer by comparison with younger workers and that they retain their capacity to learn, many older people interviewed for this study testified to their ongoing experience of age discrimination in the labour market. Most the interviewees in the sample had experienced what they perceived to be age discrimination, often by younger managers who seemed to hold negative stereotypes about the ability of older people to contribute. As a result, some of the interviewees had made a conscious decision not to work inside a large organisation but to pursue self-employment in their later years. This movement of older people towards self-employment is also suggested by the Schueler's analysis of their participation in vocational education and training.

The principal factor in the ability of older people to retain their learning capacities appears to be the level of skills they already possess. Ball's analysis of the national training statistics shows that those people with skills and qualifications are likely to experience greater access to training and learning in their work. The interviewees in this study also confirmed that those who possessed a wide range of transferable or general skills, such as those acquired in a management position, were able to handle career changes more effectively than those who had fewer skills were. Thus the acquisition of skills and qualifications at a younger age is a critical factor for older people remaining flexible and employable in older age.

Policy implications

Current initiatives, such as the expansion of the new apprenticeship system, which encourage the acquisition of skills and qualifications by young people, need to be supported and extended. It is important that those who leave school early and do not progress into further education and training are picked up by the training system so that future generations of older people possess the skills required to enhance their training and learning in later years.

Tactical learning

The importance of learning new skills, as they grew older was not lost on the interviewees in this study. Most of the interviewees stressed how they had learnt a variety of skills during their careers and that they realised that acquiring new skills and maintaining old skills was of critical importance to employability in later years. However, as Barnett points out, formal training and learning opportunities represent only one source of new skills. Most of the interviewees said that they had benefited from formal training but that they had learned important skills from a variety of sources, including on-the-job training, self-study, role models in the workplace and other colleagues. Moreover, their success at finding employment at a mature age was linked directly to their ability to realise the value of these skills by applying them in a different work context. This was particularly true for those who had learned management and organisational skills that could be transferred into a range of work environments. The key to the utilisation of skills lay in the ability of the older person to 'let go' of their previous occupational identity and create new career opportunities.

Thus, older people tend to be more tactical than younger people in their selection of skills they wish to learn and how they can be acquired. They tend not to value the notion of acquiring a qualification but rather seek out opportunities to acquire or enhance specific skills. This may well mean the use of formal training provided though employers or through external training providers. All except one of the interviewees in this study has used formal training to enhance their skills and employability. Schueler's analysis of the VET statistics also bears out this point. Older people are undertaking short, non-award vocational courses in greater numbers than younger people and they are targeting specific fields of study—TAFE multifield, business and science. As Schueler concludes:

> *The popularity of these areas of learning suggests that older people are predominantly accessing vocational programs to acquire business skills, develop or update computing skills and undertake training for employment purposes.*

When asked why they are undertaking a vocational training course, older people overwhelmingly indicate that it is to gain more skills to apply to employment or owning a business. This reinforces the notion that *skills* are what older people wish to acquire and they will be highly selective about identifying these skills and how they will acquire them. However, whether this tactical approach to skill acquisition translates into successful labour market outcomes for older people is less clear. Whereas older graduates state that they are relatively satisfied with the skills that they have acquired in VET, they are less positive about their success in finding a new job or changing career. As Ball shows, older people may suffer a similar rate of unemployment to the rest of the population but they spend much more time out of work and find it more difficult to get a job.

As people get older, qualifications appear to become less important when making decisions about training and learning. Older people take a more tactical view of their training and learning needs and are focussed on acquiring skills or on updating existing skills rather than on gaining qualifications. As human capital theory suggests, qualifications are of more use to the younger worker as employers will tend to screen applicants on the basis of their academic achievements using this a proxy for their potential in the organisation. For the older worker, experience and skills assume more importance to the potential employer.

Policy implications

Training and learning experiences need to fit the tactical approaches of older people. The training and education system needs to increasingly offer its programs on a modularised basis, so that people at all ages can focus on putting together packages of skills and qualifications that suit their particular needs and circumstances.

Taking individual responsibility for training and learning

Increasingly, studies of industry training are showing that employees are taking more responsibility for their own training and learning. Smith and Hayton (1999) showed in their study of training practices in 42 Australian enterprises that employers expected individuals to take responsibility for identifying and sourcing their training needs at work. The enterprise increasingly acted as broker to individuals rather than providing direct training. These findings have been confirmed in recent studies of the impact of organisational change on employer training practices (Smith et al. 1999). VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1999) have also shown that casual workers undertake the same amount of external training as permanent employees but that the cost of the training is borne entirely by the employee. Thus the evidence points strongly towards the increasing individualisation of training and learning.

Older people are also taking increasing responsibility for their training and learning. As Ball shows, the incidence of employer sponsored training declines with age as does their participation in VET. However, Schueler's work shows that increasing numbers of older people are undertaking VET programs with an emphasis on short, non-award courses rather than AQF programs. Often develop a more tactical approach to their training and learning needs, picking their experiences selectively from a number of potential sources of learning. This evidence suggests that older people are taking an increasing level of individual responsibility for their training and learning. For those who have undergone separation from their employers, setting up their own business is an increasingly attractive option. For those who are seeking employment, enhancing adaptability by transferring their skills to new environments or learning new skills in order to change career is critical to success. In either case, the responsibility for identifying and sourcing training and learning rests squarely with the individuals.

Policy implications

Individualisation means that the clients of the training system are as much individuals as industries, professions and enterprises. Along with the need to modularise the offerings of the training and education systems, training providers need to become more conscious of the needs of individuals as their key clientele. The era of standardisation in training needs to be followed by an new era of customisation to the increasingly fragmented needs of an individualised training market.

Increasing numbers in vocational education and training

Schueler shows that older people are flocking to both vocational and personal enrichment programs in ever increasing numbers. Whilst the numbers undertaking VET programs in Australia for all ages has grown by 60 per cent since 1990, the numbers of people in their 40s undertaking training has doubled and the numbers of people in their 50s has trebled. As a result, the proportion of those undertaking training through the VET system aged over 40 years increased from 18 per cent in 1990 to 27 per cent in 1998.

Thus, whilst the propensity to undertake training of any sort, including VET declines with age, many more older people are taking programs through the VET system. However, older people are much more highly represented in personal enrichment programs where people over 45 years represent almost 40 per cent of the total. Many of these personal enrichment programs are provided by the non-TAFE sector, in particular by community based training providers. Community training providers also supply vocational training programs. It is clear from Schueler's analysis that as people grow older they increasingly turn to community training providers for both their vocational and personal enrichment training. This is particularly true for females and older persons aged over 65 years. There is an important issue for TAFE raised by these findings, which suggest the ambience of the typical TAFE college is not well suited to older members of the community, who may find the more relaxed and informal atmosphere of a community training provider more in keeping with their training and learning requirements.

Policy implications

As part of the need to meet the requirements of individual clients, training providers must examine the attractiveness of their operations to different groups of individuals. Many training providers are set up to service primarily younger students. The host of student services provided at TAFE campuses are often predicated on an image of the student as a young person. As older clients become an increasing proportion of those undertaking vocational and other training programs, providers need to rethink the way in which they deal with older people and examine ways of making their operations more open and accessible to all age groups.

Other factors influencing the training of older people

As Ball shows, the incidence of training provision for older workers declines with age. Whereas over 82 per cent of workers in the 15-39 year age group participated in some form of training in 1997, this rate declines steadily with age to the point where less than 50 per cent of workers in the 60–64 age group participated in training. However, other studies have shown that there are many other factors that influence the incidence of employer sponsored training including the size of the organisation, the organisation's industry location and the occupational status of the employee.

Ball's analysis shows that there are a number of factors acting to compound the impact of age on the likelihood of older people to undertake training. The most significant of these factors is the labour market status of the person. Part of the explanation for the declining incidence of training amongst older workers is their changing status in the workforce. People over 55 years are less likely to be in employment earning a wage or salary and so are less likely to participate in training. The impact of employment on the incidence of training is even more marked for those who are unemployed or marginally attached to the labour force. For these groups the highest incidence of training occurs in the youngest age category with 47 per cent of those in the 15–29 age group receiving training. This figure declines to a less than 22 per cent of those in the 60–64 age group. Those older people only marginally attached to the labour force display the worst participation rates in training with participation rates declining to less than 20 per cent for those aged over 40 years.

Gender is also an important factor in the participation of older workers in training. After the age of 45 years, the participation rates for women workers are lower for all age groups than for men. This is also true for those who are not employed, particularly for women who are marginally attached to the labour force. For this group women aged 40–49 years have a participation rate of just over 13 per cent compared with nearly 40 per cent for men.

Ball's analysis illustrates the overwhelming importance of the possession of post-school qualifications to the incidence of training for older workers. Whilst nearly 63 per cent of workers with a post-school qualification aged 50–54 years undertook some study or formal training course in 1997, only 36 per cent of those without a post-school qualification undertook a course of study or formal training. Over 85 per cent of those with a post-school qualification aged 50–54 years undertook some form of training in 1997, only just over 60 per cent of those in this age group without a post-school qualification undertook some training. These figures are directly related to the numbers of older people who possess a post-school qualification. This declines from over 60 per cent of the 30-39 year age group to 48 per cent of the 60–64 age group.

However, unlike previous studies that have shown that industry and occupation have a direct and significant influence on the incidence of training, it appears that industry and occupation do not account for the declining incidence of training amongst older workers. Industries with higher proportions of older workers in their workforces are not necessarily industries that provide the lowest levels of training. Industries such as education or health and community services that employ a relatively high proportion of older workers are industries that also have a relatively high participation in training. While some industries with a high proportion of younger workers such as retail and accommodation display relatively low participation rates in training. Thus, it is not the case that industries characterised by an older workforce are industries that do not provide training opportunities for their workers. Similarly, occupations with a relatively high participation rate in training such as managers and professionals are also occupations with a relatively high proportion of older workers. Thus the age structures of industries and occupations do not provide a very good guide to the likelihood of older workers partipating in training.

Policy implications

The foregoing discussion of the factors that influence the training and learning opportunities of older people enables us to pinpoint 'risk factors' which predispose older people to receive less training.

- labour market status—older people not employed in a job earning a wage or salary are at significantly greater risk of not being able to fulfil their training and learning needs than those who are employed.
- women are less likely, in many cases, to be able to meet their training and learning needs than men.
- post-school qualifications are an important entree to further training. Those without such qualifications are less likely to receive further opportunities for training and learning.
- the industry within which older workers are employed will have a significant bearing on their training and learning opportunities. For those older workers employed in low training industries, opportunities for training and learning may be significantly lower than in high training industries. For workers caught in low training industries that are also downsizing, the risk of being abandoned on the labour market with few skills or qualifications represents a particular problem.
- the occupation of the older worker will have an important bearing on the availability of training and learning opportunities for older workers.

These factors enable us to identify groups of older people who are more at risk of not being able to benefit from the flexibility and adaptability that results from opportunities for training and learning. For those older people unemployed or marginally attached to the labour force there is a considerable risk that they will not be able to learn the new skills they require to re-enter the workforce. For those older workers caught in low training occupations and in low training industries, especially those with no post-school qualifications, there is a significant risk that they will lack the skills and adaptability to cope with the sweeping changes to patterns of work and the labour market currently under way.

Conclusion

This report has examined the training and learning experiences of older people and older workers and the factors that influence those experiences. Older people are adapting to the changes in society and the workplace by taking up opportunities for training and learning in ever greater numbers but doing so in a tactical way that will enhance their adaptability and flexibility. The old stereotype that you cannot teach an old dog new tricks is demonstrably untrue. Not only do older people retain the ability to learn and adapt to change, they take a very considered view about their own training and learning needs and the ways in which they might best source those needs. Far from acquiescing in the face of change and uncertainty, older people are creating their own futures and are making sure that their training and learning are making their futures productive and sustainable.

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